

11-Te
SACRED HISTORY,

IN
FAMILIAR DIALOGUES,
FOR THE
INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

WITH
AN APPENDIX,
CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS, FROM THE
TIME OF NEHEMIAH TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSA-
LEM BY THE ROMANS UNDER TITUS VESPASIAN.
IN SIXTEEN LETTERS.

BY A LADY. *h*

WITH
A RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE,
BY THE REV. JOHN RYLAND.

VOL. I.

Talk ye of all his wondrous works.

Pfalm cv. 2.

And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou
sitteft in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way,
when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deut. xi. 19.

— that they should make them known to their children; that the
generations to come might know them, even the children which
should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children;
that they might set their hope in God. Pfalm lxxviii. 5—7.

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THE

RECOMMENDATORY

P R E F A C E.

IT is universally admitted that young minds are much delighted with history. And we may justly affirm, that the Great Author of the Holy Scriptures, who has inserted so many beautiful narrations in the sacred pages, has thereby displayed his wisdom and his kindness, in the composition of his blessed word. The biography and history of the Scriptures are very interesting and in-

fructive to them whose judgment is most matured. Nor need we scruple to believe, that he who condescends to address such particular admonitions, invitations, and promises, to the young, had a special regard to their interest, in this pleasing method of instruction.

The infinite understanding of the Almighty has selected the most important and affecting facts, and has taught the inspired penmen to record them with such conciseness, and yet with such clearness and plainness, as no other writers can equal.

An author of distinguished piety and penetration has observed, that "there is a strange and unaccountable kind of enchantment in Scripture History, which although it is destitute of all rhetorical ornament, makes it vastly more pleasant, agreeable, easy, and natural, than any other

other history whatever. It shines bright with the amiable simplicity of truth."

As the historical part of the Bible exceeds all other history in beauty, so it is the only composition of the kind, upon which we may perfectly depend, as being free from all mistake, either through involuntary misapprehension, or wilful misrepresentation; nor can any other selection of facts be found so pregnant with instruction to readers of every class; tending to give us such a just view of human nature, and so great an insight into the springs of action, both in good men and bad; and, above all, illustrating the moral character of that all-perfect Being who is the governor and judge of mankind.

Though the simplicity and perspicuity of the sacred writers are surprisingly adapted to instruct the weakest understandings, as well as to charm and edify

those that are most refined; and their narratives especially, are, for the most part, made level even to the capacities of children; their interesting import, and beneficial tendency, to warn and instruct us, are not always so clearly obvious as to preclude all need of investigation, or to render it a useless task to explain or elucidate them further, especially for the rising generation.

I think, therefore, my respected friend has discovered a pious and laudable zeal for the benefit of the youth of both sexes, in forming familiar dialogues upon all the principal histories of the Old and New Testament. Her design of engaging the attention of children to that part of the divine word which seems peculiarly suited to impress their tender minds, is doubtless highly commendable. And after perusing the principal part of her manuscript, I own myself greatly pleased with

with the execution of her plan, as uniting much entertainment with the most profitable and evangelical improvement of the scripture histories. In the latter respect especially, if not in both, it exceeds any attempt of the kind that I have seen.

The continuation of the Jewish history, added by way of Appendix, will be very pleasing and instructive. It is doubtless of peculiar importance to call the attention of young people to the fulfilment of our Lord's predictions, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, as the judgments inflicted on that ungrateful nation, and their present preservation in so dispersed and afflicted a state, form the strongest external evidences of the truth of christianity.

My knowledge of the author fully satisfies me, that her great end, in this attempt, has been to glorify God, by

promoting the best interests of young people, both within the circle of her acquaintance, and beyond its extent. The perusal of the work will induce every candid mind to indulge the same opinion.

I conclude, therefore, that many will unite with myself, in sincerely wishing that the divine blessing may attend the perusal of these Dialogues and Letters, and render them truly useful to a great number of juvenile readers; which event will give sincere pleasure to the author, to all their best friends, and to their cordial wellwisher

JOHN RYLAND.

AUTHOR'S ADDRESS

TO HER

YOUNG FRIENDS.

IT is of some consequence for you, my dear young friends, to know that the following work is not a cunningly devised fable; but that it contains a plain and faithful narrative of important facts, principally founded on the scriptures of truth, and intimately connected with the leading articles of our faith.

The

The author's first intention in forming the Sacred History into conversations, was for the purpose of instructing three dear children nearly related to her, without any design of submitting them to public inspection. A friend, on perusing a few of the Dialogues, intreated that the work might be carried on with a view to more general instruction. This request was accompanied with arguments which induced a compliance; and hence it has found its way into your hands. In the use you make of it, I look for my reward. Consider the subject of which it treats,—the perfections of God, as they shine forth in the works of creation and providence, but, above all, in redemption.

It may afford you a delightful employment to compare these Dialogues with the word of God. They are not intended to draw your minds from the sacred writings, but rather to induce you to search the scriptures, to see whether these things are so.

I hope

I hope you are not among those who despise the scripture on account of its simplicity. This is one of its delightful peculiarities, that it simplifies without disgusting. But, if you have a taste for the sublime, the bible contains a thousand passages both of the sublime and pathetic. The force and energy of its language, the conciseness and perspicuity of its style, and the vast importance of its doctrines, stamp a value and dignity upon this book, which render it superior to all the books in the world. Let me intreat you, then, my young friends, to study it, with prayer to God, to enlighten your understandings, that you may behold the beauties it contains, and be made wise unto salvation.

In the following pages, you will meet with some observations and reflections suggested by other authors, which I have taken the liberty to insert. In doing this, I have endeavoured to follow the example of the botanist, who diligently employs his time and

and talents, in searching for plants and herbs, which, having selected, he carefully transplants into his own garden for the use of others. In like manner, when any passage has struck me in the course of my reading, that I thought might be serviceable to my young friends, I have not scrupled to adopt it, and give it a place in the present work, for their use and benefit. There are few authors with whom I have taken greater liberties, in this respect, than the Rev. Mr. Scott; whose notes and observations, in his Family Bible, have afforded me considerable assistance. I feel the greater pleasure in discharging this debt of gratitude, as it gives me an opportunity of recommending to the perusal of my young friends, that valuable production, in which the beauties of the sacred records are unfolded, in a manner, suited to affect the heart as well as to inform the understanding. to signify all well of him or her

But I will not intrude on your time any longer.

longer. May a divine blessing accompany
the well-meant endeavour of

Your affectionate friend,

* * * * *

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longer. May a divine blessing accompany
the well-meant endeavor of

Your affectionate friend,

C O N T E N T S

OF THE

FIRST VOLUME.

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A

Dial.

Dial.

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SACRED

SACRED HISTORY,

Ec. Ec.

INTRODUCTORY DIALOGUE.

Aunt. **G**OOD morning, my dear Lucy; what has brought you here so early?

Lucy. I am come, aunt, to acquaint you, that my mamma has just received a letter, informing her of the death of my dear little friend Miss ——. I am quite grieved: I wish I was as good as she was, for I do not doubt but she is gone to Heaven: my dear mamma has always been instructing me in good things, and yet I know but little: I wish I was sure of going to Heaven.

Aunt. The only way to attain that knowledge is to search the Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation. I will assist you, my dear child, to form an acquaintance with them, which, with the blessing of God, may prove of lasting advantage to you. As history makes the deepest impression on

VOL. I. B young

young minds, we will, for the present, attend chiefly to the historical part.

Lucy. When will you begin?

Aunt. To-morrow. If your mamma will permit your brother and sister to attend with you one hour every day, I hope both to entertain and instruct you in things of real importance.

Lucy. How can we be entertained out of the Bible? I thought we must be serious when we read it, and that children could not understand it.

Aunt. Undoubtedly, you ought to be serious when you read the word of God; but a serious attention to the things we read does not deprive us of entertainment. I suppose you thought it was put into your hands only to teach you to read; and that you should never be able to understand it till you were grown up.

Lucy. Indeed, aunt, that is just what I thought.

Aunt. I heard you the other day reading to your mamma in the Roman History; could you find any entertainment in that?

Lucy. What, in Mrs. Trimmer's little book for children? I could read in it all day: that is a pretty story of the Sabine Women.

Aunt. Can you remember it? I should be glad to hear it.

Lucy. I was so much delighted with it, that I

shall not soon forget it, and will with pleasure repeat it to you. (See No. V. p. 18, of Mrs. Trimmer's Roman History.)

Aunt. I am much obliged to you, my dear, for the relation you have given me; and, in return, I will give you an account of a Queen, who saved her people at the imminent hazard of her own life.

Lucy. I am all impatience to hear it.

Aunt. There was a king, Ahasuerus, who reigned in Persia. In the third year of his reign he made a great feast, and invited all his princes and nobles: the queen, Vashti, also made a feast for the ladies: and on the seventh day the king ordered his chamberlains to bring the queen before him, that he might shew the princes and people her beauty, for she was very fair; but the queen refused to come; and the king was very angry.

Lucy. Why did she refuse?

Aunt. The king's command was certainly imprudent and unreasonable; and it is said, he was merry with wine. Riotous feasting often proves fatal to the peace of families. In his rage, he asked his wise men what could be done to the queen, according to law, for disobeying the king: his counsellors advised him to make a decree, and establish it as a law, that the queen come no more before the king;

and that the king should give her royal dignity to another: and the thing pleased the king, and he did so.

Lucy. I pity the poor queen! I hope he never got another.

Aunt. Yes, he did; for many strove for the honour, as you will see, when you come to read the story at large. When the wrath of the king was appeased, he remembered Vashti; but he could not alter the decree that he had made: and his servants advised him, that fair young women might be sought out, that the king might choose him another queen. At that time there was a people, called Jews, whom Nebuchadnezzar had overcome in war, and brought captives from their own land. One of these people, whose name was Mordecai, had a very beautiful niece, whom he brought to the king's house; her name was Esther: and Mordecai charged her not to tell who were her kindred or people. And when the king saw Esther, he loved her, and made her queen, and set the royal crown on her head; and the king made a great feast, and called it Esther's feast.

Lucy. Did he send for the queen?

Aunt. No, my dear; he had learned prudence by his former folly: he did what was becoming a great king; he made a release to the provinces, and sent gifts. After these things the king advanced one

Haman,

Haman, and set him above all the princes, and the king's servants bowed before him; but Mordecai, who sat continually in the king's gate, would not bow down to him, nor do him reverence: this enraged Haman exceedingly; and when he found that Mordecai was a Jew, in order to take full revenge, he determined to destroy all the Jews in the kingdom.

Lucy. Wicked Haman! I am glad he did not know that queen Esther was one of them.

Aunt. But you will find, by the sequel of the story, that she acknowledged herself to belong to that oppressed people.

Lucy. I am surprised queen Esther should be so foolish!

Aunt. My dear, you have decided too soon on Esther's character: you should always hear the whole account before you give your opinion, or else the remark may recoil on yourself.

Lucy. Pardon me, my dear aunt: for the future I will endeavour to think before I speak. Pray, aunt, proceed.

Aunt. Haman went to the king, and told him, there was a people in his realm, called Jews, whose laws were different from all nations; therefore it was not for the king's profit to suffer them to live: but said he, if the king will let them be destroyed, I will pay into the king's treasury ten thousand talents of silver.

Lucy. What, was he to pay it out of his own fortune?

Aunt. No; from the spoil of the Jews: but the king said, The silver is thine, and the people also; do with them as seemeth thee good.

Lucy. What did he do? put them to death immediately?

Aunt. Before he went to the king to petition for their destruction, confident of success, he had cast lots, to see on what day he should destroy them: providentially for the Jews, the lot fell on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, so that they had time before them. Then Haman hastened, and wrote to the king's lieutenants, and governors of the provinces, in the king's name, and sealed the letters with the king's seal, giving orders to destroy and kill all the Jews, men, women, and children, in one day, even on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month.

Lucy. O poor Mordecai! and to kill all the little children! How they must cry when they heard it!

Aunt. Indeed, my dear, they did; for there was universal weeping and lamentation among the Jews. And Esther's servants told her, that they saw Mordecai weeping and wailing; and she sent Hatach, her chamberlain, to enquire the cause of his grief. Mordecai told him all that had happened, and sent a copy
of

of the decree to the queen, charging her to go in unto the king, to make supplication for her people ; and Esther sent again to excuse herself, saying, The king hath not sent for me these thirty days ; and it is well known, that for any person to go in unto the king, into the inner court, who is not called, it is certain death, unless the king hold out his golden sceptre, that they may live. Then Mordecai returned this answer to the queen : Think not that thou shalt escape, in the king's house, more than all the Jews ; for, if thou holdest thy peace at this time, deliverance shall arise to the Jews from another place.

Lucy. How was he sure they should be delivered ?

Aunt. He believed in the true God, who he knew was able to deliver his people.

Lucy. Then why did he want Esther to venture her life ? for he must remember what the king did to queen Vashti ; and if God would deliver them, that would be best.

Aunt. Our faith in God is not to prevent our using all the means in our power ; and Mordecai made use of that argument with Esther, Who knoweth but God hath advanced thee to the kingdom for such a time as this ? And she sent Mordecai this word : I and my maidens will fast three days ; and do ye, and all the Jews who are at Shushan, the same ; and I will go in unto the king, which is contrary to the law ; and, if I perish, I perish.

Lucy.

Lucy. Why did she not go immediately?

Aunt. She gave herself time to order her cause before God, to seek his direction; for she knew he had the hearts of all men in his hands, and could turn them as he saw fit: she, therefore, first bowed the knee in supplication to God, and then boldly undertook the cause of her people. On the third day she put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house; and the king sat on his throne. As soon as he saw the queen, he held out the sceptre; and she drew near, and touched the top of it: then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? I will give it thee, even to the half of my kingdom. The queen answered, The favour that I request is, That the king and Haman would come this day to the banquet of wine that I have prepared.

Lucy. What could the queen mean by asking for Haman, her enemy, with the king? I long to know how it will end.

Aunt. The king and Haman went, according to appointment. The king again pressed the queen to let him know her request, and it should be granted, even to the half of his kingdom. The queen still deferred it, and contented herself with inviting the king and Haman to another banquet the next day.

Lucy. Haman must think himself in great favour with the queen.

Aunt.

Aunt. He did; and went home in high spirits, telling his friends, and Zeresh his wife, that the king had promoted him to great honour, and had advanced him above the princes; and also, that the queen had invited none with the king to the banquet but himself; yet all this, added he, availeth me nothing, so long as Mordecai the Jew sitteth at the king's gate, and refuseth to bow down to me. Then, said Zeresh his wife, and all his friends, unto him, Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and to-morrow speak thou unto the king, that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; then go thou in merrily with the king to the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows to be made.

Lucy. Zeresh is as bad as Haman. Poor Mordecai! it is all over with him! Esther will wish she had presented her petition at first.

Aunt. On that night the king's mind was so perplexed, he could not sleep; and he ordered the book of records to be read to him; and it was found written, that Mordecai had discovered that two of the king's chamberlains had conspired against the king's life. And the king said, What honour, and dignity hath been conferred on Mordecai for this? And they answered, None. Just at this juncture, Haman was coming to the king, to obtain leave to have Mordecai hanged.

Lucy.

Lucy. I long to know what the king will say to him.

Aunt. Before Haman had opportunity to speak, the king asked him, What should be done to the man whom the king delighted to honour. Now Haman thought it could be none but himself, that the king meant to honour; and he replied: For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, let the king's apparel be brought, and his horse, and his crown royal; and let this apparel and horse be given to one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal, whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him: "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour." And the king said, Make haste, and take the apparel, and the horse, and do so unto Mordecai the Jew, and fail in nothing that thou hast said.

Lucy. Oh, how delighted I am! Now, what will he do with his gallows?

Aunt. Never did a greater blow fall on a proud man than this! but he was obliged to submit, and obey the king. After he had thus honoured Mordecai, he returned home sorrowful, and told his wife and his friends all that had befallen him; but, while he was speaking, the king's chamberlain came, and hastened him away to go with the king to the banquet. When they came to the queen, the king said the same to her which he had done the day before;

before; and the queen answered, and said: If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people's at my request; for we are sold, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. Then said the king unto the queen, Who, and where, is he that durst presume to do any such thing? And the queen said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then the king, rising in anger, went into the palace-garden; and Haman was making request to the queen for his life, when the king returned. And the king was wroth with Haman. And one of the chamberlains said to the king, Behold, there is a gallows, which he made in the court of his house, to hang Mordecai, who hath spoken good for the king. Then said Ahasuerus, Take Haman, and hang him thereon.

Lucy. Haman little thought when he was making the gallows, that he should be the first to suffer on it:

Aunt. The pit which he dug for another he fell into himself. The queen then intreated the king to put away the evil of Haman, and to frustrate his wicked device. And the king gave Haman's house to Esther, and made Mordecai prime minister, with full orders to take such measures as would best provide for the safety of the Jews. Mordecai was then clothed in royal apparel, and behaved so well in his place, that the city of Shushan rejoiced at his advancement; the Jews were universally respected,
and

and many of the people turned from worshipping false gods, and became Jews.

Lucy. Is this really a true story?

Aunt. It is, my dear. If you would like to read the account at large, you will find it in your Bible.

Lucy. I have read most of the Bible, but I do not remember it.

Aunt. It is the general fault of children to read the Bible without thought. When you read the Roman History, you understood it; Why? because your expectation was raised with the hope of finding something to entertain you: was it not so, my dear?

Lucy. Indeed, my dear aunt, I must confess, with shame, it is just as you say; but I hope, for the future, I shall pay more attention, when I read the Bible.

Aunt. In giving you the history of it, I shall adopt the same method, which I have pursued this morning, and thus endeavour to draw your mind to behold the beauties of the divine records. You see, in this story, that I have now related, the goodness of God to those who put their trust in him; what piety and fortitude appeared in the queen, and what a sudden change took place from the king's loss of sleep, which sheweth that the Most High ruleth over the minds of men, and that no weapon, formed against his people, shall prosper. Haman was glorying in his success, when, lo! sudden destruction overtook him! And what a change
for

for the poor Jews! the despised Mordecai now raised to be prime minister, and their mortal enemy hanged! They were brought low, but the power of God raised them up.

These transactions include a period of ten years, from about the year of the world 3486 to the year 3496. But, my dear, I fear your mamma will think your visit long.

Lucy. I hope not, for I think it has been very short: I long for to-morrow; then, with my mamma's permission, I will bring George and Maria.

Aunt. How will you persuade them to come?

Lucy. I will tell them this story.

Aunt. Can you remember it?

Lucy. That I can; and will go and tell it to mamma, and brother and sister.

Aunt. Tell them I intend to begin the Scripture History to-morrow, and go regularly through the whole.

for the poor Jew! the despised Mendicant now
titled as the Prince of the Jews and their eternal enemy
hanged! They were proud & low, but the power
of God could bring us

These prophecies include a part of my years
from about the year of the world 3333 to the year
3334. I have seen the Jews in various parts of the
world. I have seen them in the East, in the West,
in the North, and in the South. I have seen them
in the East, in the West, in the North, and in the South.
I have seen them in the East, in the West, in the North,
and in the South. I have seen them in the East, in the
West, in the North, and in the South. I have seen them
in the East, in the West, in the North, and in the South.

But I will tell you this story
that I have seen them in the East, in the West, in the
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East, in the West, in the North, and in the South.

DIALOGUE I.

Aunt. **G**OOD morning, my dear children; you are come very early;

George. We have been quite impatient, since my sister related to us the pretty story you told her.

Aunt. And what do you expect to hear to-day, George?

George. About Adam and Eve.

Maria. That is a very short story; I hope, aunt, you will tell us a longer, and a prettier one.

Aunt. I cannot, my dear Maria, tell you any in which you are more deeply interested; or that it is of greater importance to be well acquainted with.

Lucy. I don't love to think of Adam and Eve; for if they had not sinned, we might have been in Paradise now.

Aunt. Then, my dear, I suppose you think if you had been in their situation, you would have acted very differently.

Lucy. I do not believe I should have done as they did; they had every thing to make them happy:

why could they not be content; especially when they were told the consequences of disobedience?

Aunt. You know but little, my dear, of your own heart, or you would not talk so. In order to convince you of your mistake, I will relate a simple tale, that I met with some time ago.—A gentleman in his walks used frequently to hear a man and his wife, who laboured hard for a livelihood, uttering bitter complaints against Adam and Eve; continually saying,—if it had not been for Adam and Eve, we need not have laboured thus; we might have lived better than you gentry. One day the gentleman went to them, and told them, that as he found they were discontented with their present lot, and laid all the blame on Adam and Eve; in order to silence their complaints, he would take them to his own house, where they should have apartments to themselves; servants to wait on them; his carriage to attend them; and his park and gardens to amuse themselves in. Oh! said they, this will be a paradise to us! All this, said the gentleman, shall be yours; and your enjoyment of it shall depend on yourselves. You shall have a table spread with a variety of dishes; but the middle dish shall always be covered; and, if ever you uncover it, you shall immediately return to your present situation. The terms were accepted; they went to the gentleman's house;

house; they enjoyed their new abode; all was delight! every new scene afforded new pleasure! But, by degrees, they began to take less and less satisfaction in them; there was no novelty; their walks were the same; their table abounded with superfluities, but their appetites were not so good as when they worked for their bread. They could not eat of this, nor of that dish: I wonder, said the wife, what is under that covered dish.

Lucy. I think if I had been in their place, I would just have lifted up the cover, and peeped.

George. I am sure I would have seen what was there.

Maria. So would I.

Aunt. My dear children, they were of your mind; their whole happiness seemed to depend on the knowledge of what was under this one dish; and they agreed together gently to lift up the cover, and peep; which was immediately done; when, to their great astonishment, away ran a little mouse. They saw their folly, but it was in vain to upbraid each other. The fact was discovered, and the gentleman sent them back to their own cottage, where they returned to their labour, never more laying the blame of their condition upon Adam and Eve; being taught by fatal experience, that they should have done the same had they been in their situation.

George. Pray, aunt, is this a true story?

Aunt. I will not vouch for the truth of it; but, whether the story be true or not, it gives us a true picture of human nature; and it was for that purpose I introduced it. We will now enter on the Scripture History.

In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth; the sun, moon, and stars; the birds, beasts, and fishes; and, on the sixth day, God created Adam and Eve, and placed them in the Garden of Eden; and rested on the seventh day. What particular duty, my dear children, is inculcated by God's resting on the seventh day?

Lucy. That we should rest a seventh part of our time from worldly business, and devote it to God.

Aunt. You are right, my dear; the sabbath is to be entirely the Lord's; we are not to worship the Lord part of the day, and spend the rest in idle walks, or vain amusements; for God will not be disobeyed with impunity, and he hath said, Remember to keep holy the sabbath day.

Lucy. In what part of the world was the Garden of Eden placed?

Aunt. It appears to have been situated in that part, which was afterwards called Chaldea, to the east of Canaan, and probably not far from ancient Babylon, having Northern Arabia on the west, Persia on the east, Assyria on the north-east, and Mesopotamia on the north-west.

north-west. The famous rivers, Euphrates on the west, and Hiddekel, or Tigris, on the east, being united in Eden, watered the garden; and then, running a little southward, parted again into the two streams of Gihon on the east, and Pison on the west, both of which empty themselves into the Persian Gulf.

George. What did Adam and Eve do in the garden?

Aunt. They employed themselves in dressing it. And God blessed them, and gave them dominion over the beasts of the earth, and over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air. And God said unto Adam, Of all the fruits and herbs of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Lucy. Why was this tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

Aunt. Because by abstaining from the fruit of it, in obedience to God's command, the knowledge of good would be enjoyed; but by eating of it, in disobedience to God, the knowledge of evil would be fatally introduced.

Lucy. Did God speak to them himself?

Aunt. Yes, my dear; the intimate communion they had with God constituted their felicity. Thus were they in this happy state, when that malignant

foe to mankind, the devil, determined to attempt their destruction.

George. How did he mean to destroy them?

Aunt. By tempting them to eat of the forbidden fruit.

Maria. Where did he come from?

Aunt. His original habitation was in Heaven; but he, being joined by many more wicked angels, rebelled against God; and God cast them out of heaven, and sent them down to hell.

Maria. What sort of a place is hell?

Aunt. It is a place of darkness, torment, and banishment from God; where they are continually hating God, and hating one another. This wicked spirit saw man's happiness, and wished to make him sin against God; perhaps he heard God's prohibition; and might think, if he could but tempt them to disobedience, he should make them as miserable as himself, and so frustrate the designs of God. With this view he enters into the serpent, as being more subtle than any of the beasts; and says to the woman, Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of every tree of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

Maria.

Maria. Pray, aunt, do serpents talk?

Aunt. If you recollect, the devil entered into the serpent; and it was the devil that was now speaking unto Eve in the serpent. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.

Lucy. What! were they to be as Gods?

Aunt. That was what the father of lies pleased to tell them; and Eve listened to his subtle insinuations: for when she saw the tree that it was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband, and he did eat. And the eyes of both of them were opened.

George. Then the serpent was right; he told them it should be so.

Aunt. Ah, my dear George! but what were their eyes opened to behold! not that they were Gods, but fallen creatures. And they perceived that they were naked, and they plaited fig leaves together, and made them aprons; for the glory of the Lord had departed from them, and they were ashamed.

Maria. But God said they should die.

Aunt. They did immediately feel the worst of deaths; they were dead to God; dead in trespasses and sins;

sins; and they became subject every moment to temporal death. In this situation they heard the voice of God in the garden; and they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord, among the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And Adam said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And God said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

Lucy. Why this is reflecting upon God himself! But what could Eve say?

Aunt. She said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. Then the Lord pronounced sentence on each. To the serpent he said, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above every beast of the field; and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. This not only referred to the serpent, but likewise to the devil, who is called, the old serpent; and the promise of bruising his head refers to the Messiah, who is here called the seed of the woman, and was afterwards manifested for this purpose to destroy the works of the

the devil. God also pronounced sentence on the woman, that her sorrows should be multiplied. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee not to eat, cursed is the ground for thy sake; in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And God clothed them with coats of skins; and turned them out of the garden, to till and dress the ground; which now brought forth thorns and thistles, in consequence of the curse, which God had pronounced upon it. But we must conclude for to-day.

DIALOGUE

George

DIALOGUE II.

Maria. **P**RAY, aunt, tell us about Cain and Abel.

Aunt. Cain was Adam's eldest son; they were both born after their parents had been turned out of paradise for sinning against God. Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground. And Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord: Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but, unto Cain and to his offering, he had not respect. And Cain was very angry and displeased.

Lucy. Why had God more respect to Abel's offering than to Cain's?

Aunt. Because Abel's was offered in faith, as you may see in Heb. xi. 4. We may reasonably suppose that God had given them directions concerning sacrifices, which Abel obeyed, but Cain despised, following his own inventions: yet God condescended to expostulate with him; telling him, that if he did well he should be accepted, but if he did not well, sin would lie at his door.

George.

George. He had only to follow the example of his brother, and be happy.

Aunt. But that was not his inclination. And he went into the field, and talked with his brother.

Maria. I should like very much to know what he said to him.

Aunt. As the Almighty has not thought fit to record it, I cannot inform you; but this we know, that his passions so far got the better of all natural affection, that he rose up, and slew his brother Abel; thereby involving himself, his father, and mother in the deepest distress. What must be the feelings of Adam and Eve, to see their dear Abel a breathless corpse, and that by the hands of his brother! But the scene is too shocking to dwell upon. Cain from thenceforth became a fugitive and vagabond: and he left his father and mother, and settled in another place, and built a city. I hope, my dear children, you will guard against envious passions: instead of hating any for being good, rather endeavour to follow their example, by which you may attain every thing which is desirable and lovely in their characters.

Lucy. But Adam and Eve must have had a great many children.

Aunt. Undoubtedly they had; yet there is very little more recorded, for above a thousand years,

than the names of the patriarchs, or heads of families, in that line from which Noah descended: and these all died; except Enoch, who was a very holy man; and he walked with God; and God took him. By this time there were multitudes of people, and they were very wicked, and it repented the Lord that he had made man. And the Lord determined to destroy every living creature, but Noah found favour in his sight. And the Lord told him what he intended to do, and gave him directions to make an ark, to save himself and family, while all the rest of the world should be destroyed with an overwhelming flood. The ark was to be so constructed that it might float on the waters. And God ordered Noah to take of the clean beasts by sevens, that is, those proper for food or sacrifice, and of the unclean, that were not fit for either, by pairs, and of the fowls by sevens.

Lucy. How could he catch them, especially the birds?

Aunt. He who gave the commandment, made the birds and beasts come to Noah; and they went into the ark with him, and his family; and the Lord shut them in.

Lucy. How many were there in Noah's family when he went into the ark?

Aunt. The family of Noah consisted of eight persons; Noah and his wife, with his three sons, Shem, Ham,

Ham, and Japheth, and their wives, from whom all that have lived from that period down to the present time are descended in regular succession.

Lucy. I wonder whether Noah told the people that there was a flood coming which would drown them all.

Aunt. You will find Noah preached, and warned them to repent, if you refer to 2 Pet. ii. 5. where he is expressly called, a preacher of righteousness.

Lucy. I think they must all long to get into the ark when the rain descended.

Aunt. But then it was too late ; they would not believe Noah, nor did they repent of their sins at his preaching : they despised him as a fool and a madman ; but now they see, he was made wise to salvation ; he is saved, and they destroyed. This ark is a type or emblem of Jesus Christ : all that were in the ark were safe ; and all that are found in Christ are secure, and will be happy in heaven ; while those who are out of Christ will be destroyed.

And it rained forty days and forty nights, and every living creature died ; and the highest mountains were covered with water. After one whole year the waters were dried up ; and God commanded Noah and his family to go out of the ark. And Noah offered up a burnt offering to the Lord, on an altar which he had made. And God blessed Noah and his sons ; and

God made a covenant with Noah, that there should no more be a flood to destroy the earth ; and God set a bow in the clouds, as a covenant between him and man.

George. Is that what we call a rainbow?

Aunt. It is.

Lucy. A gentleman, at our house the other day, gave us an account of a very great flood, that destroyed many houses, and people, and cattle ; I suppose the bow was not seen in the clouds at that time.

Aunt. The bow is a token of God's mercy to us, but he needs not any thing to remind him of his promises : though God says, he will not destroy the earth any more by a flood, yet that does not imply that he will not destroy any part ; for partial floods are no uncommon things, but arise from natural causes ; there are low grounds which are overflowed at particular seasons of the year ; sometimes the rains come so unexpectedly, that there is not sufficient time to remove the cattle to higher grounds, and accordingly many have perished ; and the banks of the rivers have often been broken down by the rapidity of the stream, so that the adjacent country has been laid under water for miles.

Lucy. I hope, aunt, you will excuse me for interrupting you.

Aunt. My dear, I wish you to speak freely what-
ever

ever you think, as it gives me an opportunity to remove your doubts, or rectify your mistakes.

Lucy. Then, my dear aunt, I will trouble you once more. Pray can you inform me which of Noah's sons we are descended from; as you intimated just now that all who have lived in the world since that time are descended from one or other of them.

Aunt. That part of the world which we inhabit was occupied by the posterity of Japheth, whose numerous descendants peopled almost all Europe, a great part of Asia, and probably the whole of America. There was a remarkable prediction, delivered by Noah, a little before his death, in which some of the principal events that should befall his posterity are particularly pointed out. This prophecy has been gradually receiving its accomplishment, in different ages and nations, down to the present time. But it would lead me too far to enter upon that subject now. You will see a particular illustration of it in Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, which your mamma will put into your hands, when you are a little older, and better able to understand it.

George. Were the people who lived after the flood less wicked than those who lived before?

Aunt. Human nature, my dear child, is the same in every age. There is a constant propensity in the heart of man, when left to himself, to sin against God.

God. This we are assured of, upon an authority which cannot err. See Gen. vi. 5, where it is expressly said, And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Now, lest we should conclude that this referred only to the state of mankind before the deluge, the same thing is repeated after that event had taken place. See chap. viii. 21, of the same book, where the Lord says, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. This disposition of the heart was very soon manifested by the conduct of those who lived after the flood : for one of the first things related of them is, that they said one to another, Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we should be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. Accordingly they began to build, but the Lord was displeased; and he came down and confounded their language; for till this time, they all spoke one language. And they could not understand one another; and they called the tower, or city, Babel, that is, confusion.

Maria. But had they forgot how they used to talk?

Aunt. They certainly had; and they separated from each other, and were scattered over the face of the

the whole earth, and became different nations, speaking various languages, which has continued to this very day.

Lucy. Then their designs were defeated.

Aunt. They had two objects in view; one was to make themselves a name, and the other to prevent their being scattered abroad, in both of which they were disappointed; for it is very remarkable, we are not told the name of any one of these Babel builders, but they are left to perish in total obscurity; and the miraculous confounding of their languages obliged them to separate sooner than they otherwise need to have done. Thus the Lord taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. To-morrow we shall begin the history of Abraham.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE III.

George. **W**E might have had a ride this morning, aunt, but we preferred hearing the history of Abraham.

Aunt. He was a man renowned for his faith, and obedience to God, at whose command he left his father's house, and went into a strange country, at the age of seventy five. And God promised to guide him in the way which he should go, and to make of him a great nation: relying on this promise, Abraham departed, taking with him Sarah his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and his servants, and all his substance, and went into the land of Canaan. And the Lord appeared unto him, and blessed him, promising to give all the land of Canaan to his posterity.

George. Had they houses to live in?

Aunt. No, they had not; they dwelt in tents: their riches consisted much in cattle; and when the pasturage of one place was consumed, they removed to another. Abraham was very rich; he had large
I flocks

flocks and herds of cattle, with gold and silver in abundance.

Lucy. I think he could not enjoy it much, while moving from one place to another.

Aunt. My dear, you will ever find that the enjoyments of this world can of themselves yield no solid satisfaction to the possessor; but when we feel, as Abraham did, that ourselves and all we have are at the disposal of God, then we shall be happy in any place or situation. Lot also, Abraham's kinsman, had tents, and flocks, and herds. And Abraham's servants and Lot's servants disagreed. Abraham then spake to Lot, saying, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between us or our servants, for we are brethren; our substance is too great for us to dwell together: let us, therefore, separate; choose thou, either to the right or to the left.—Observe, my dear children, that happiness is not increased by riches.

Maria. Then I'll not wish to be rich.

Aunt. In all probability you will be happier if you are not. Abraham had the blessing of God with his riches; for God had said unto him, In blessing I will bless thee; yet you see he could not be exempt from the inconveniencies attendant on them. Lot and he must part. And Lot chose all the plain of Jordan, because it was a fine country, and well watered; and he pitched his tent near Sodom,

dom, which was a place famous, or rather infamous, for its wickedness; but Lot disregarded that, his heart being set on increasing his riches; and by this unwise choice of dwelling with the wicked he was soon plunged into difficulties and distress, and afterwards lost all his substance.

Lucy. How happened that?

Aunt. He had not been long settled in the country, before a war broke out: the occasion was this; Bera, king of Sodom, Birsna, king of Gomorrah, Shinab, king of Admah, Shemeber, king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is the same as Zoar, were twelve years in a state of subjection to Chedorlaomer, king of Elam; but, in the thirteenth year, thinking themselves strong enough to throw off the yoke, they rebelled against him, and would serve him no longer. Chedorlaomer, being unwilling to give up his authority, and not having force sufficient to subdue them himself, engaged the assistance of Amraphel, king of Shinar, Arioch, king of Ellasar, and Tidal, king of nations. The contest was decided in a pitched battle, which was fought in the vale of Siddim, and terminated in a complete victory on the part of Chedorlaomer, and the kings confederate with him; for we are informed that they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. It is added, And they
took

took Lot, Abraham's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. Tidings of this being brought to Abraham, he immediately armed his servants, amounting to three hundred and eighteen, who were trained up in his own house, and set off in pursuit of the conquering army. Coming upon them unprepared, he gained a most complete victory over them, recovered all the goods, and brought back his brother Lot, and his goods, the women also, and the people. On his return from this victory, he was met by Melchizedec, who presented him with bread and wine, and pronounced a blessing upon him. This Melchizedec was a very extraordinary person. He is called, The Priest of the most high God, and is spoken of in the New Testament, as an eminent type of Christ. His name signifies king of righteousness; he was also king of Salem, which is, by interpretation, king of peace. Some time after this, we have an account of Abraham entertaining three angels.

George. Did they fly down from heaven?

Aunt. No; they appeared to Abraham in the form of men, as he was sitting at his tent door. As soon as he saw them, he ran to meet them, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant; rest yourselves, I pray you, and

and partake of some refreshment. And he hastened to Sarah his wife to prepare it; and they did eat with him; and the Lord promised Abraham a son by Sarah. And the two men went towards Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord, who conversed with him as a man would with his friend, and told him of his intention of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah.

Lucy. Is this an angel that Abraham is now talking with?

Aunt. By Abraham's addressing him as God, we cannot be at a loss to know who he was; he could be no other than the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, though now veiled under the form of a man. And Abraham undertakes to plead with him for Sodom.—Fetch the Bible, Lucy, and read the 18th chapter of Genesis, from the 23d verse to the end.

Maria. I think Abraham was very good to plead with God for so wicked a place.

Aunt. And how wonderfully, my dear children, does God condescend to answer his petitions, by assuring him, that if there were only ten righteous persons found in the city, he would spare it for their sakes; which is an encouragement for us to seek to the Lord, for our relations and friends, and for a wicked world.

George.

George. But God does not come and talk with us as he did with Abraham; and how shall we know that he hears us?

Aunt. We may be satisfied that the Lord hears us, if we call upon him in truth, for his own word assures us of it Psalm cxlv. 18, 19. We are also told that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, James v. 16. But, to proceed;—The two angels went to Sodom; and Lot sat in the gate: seeing strangers, he rose, and invited them to his house for the night; when they informed him that the Lord had sent them to destroy that city. And in the morning the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of this place. And while they lingered, the men laid hold of his hand, and of the hand of his wife, and of his daughters; the Lord being merciful to him. And they set him without the city, and said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay in all the plain; escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed. And Lot intreated the Lord to let him flee to a little city, which was near. And the Lord said, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city: haste thee, escape thither.—The sun was risen on the earth when Lot entered Zoar, for that was the name of the city. Then the Lord rained

upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from out of heaven, and destroyed the cities, with all their inhabitants, and the plain, and all which grew on the ground.

Lucy. I think Lot's wife looked back, and became a pillar of salt.

Aunt. She did so; in direct opposition to the command of God, who had forbidden their looking back.

Maria. Did Lot ever become rich again?

Aunt. We have no account that he did. He afterwards left Zoar, and went and dwelt in a cave in the mountain, he and his two daughters.—But, we will now return to Abraham, who, according to the

Year of the World 2108. promise God had made to him, had a son the year following, whom he called Isaac.

He was in the hundredth year of his age when this child was born: and when Sarah weaned him, Abraham made a great feast. And Sarah saw Ishmael mocking her dear little Isaac; and she said to Abraham, Cast out this bond-woman and her son.

Maria. Who was Ishmael?

Aunt. He was Abraham's son by Hagar, Sarah's maid. And Abraham was grieved on account of his son; but the Lord said unto him, Be not grieved, do as Sarah has said; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called; (here again is a promise of the Messiah;) and of the son of the bond-woman will I make a

great

great nation, because he is thy son. And Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away the next morning; and they wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

George. I should not like to live in a wilderness, because I have heard that wild beasts inhabit those places, and I should be afraid of being devoured.

Aunt. We need fear no evil, George, if God be with us. Under the special care of Providence, the lad grew, and dwelt in the wilderness. When arrived at maturity, he married, and increased to be a great people, according to the promise made to Abraham; for we have the names of Ishmael's sons, which were twelve; and they were called princes, according to their nations. The posterity of Ishmael are still subsisting in the Arabs. When you come to read Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, you will find a large account of them. Some years after this, the Lord tried Abraham's faith, by commanding him to offer up his beloved son, saying Year of the World 2133. unto him, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

Lucy. This must be a trial indeed!

Aunt. Yet Abraham hesitated not, but obeyed God. And he rose early in the morning, and took

two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and the wood for a burnt offering, and went unto the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lift up his eyes, and saw the place afar off, and said unto the young men, Abide ye here, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son: and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife: and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto his father, and said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. And they came to the place which God had told him of. And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar: and Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he answered, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld a ram caught by his horns in a thicket; and he offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And he called the

the name of that place Jehovah-jireh, that is, the Lord will provide.

Lucy. If God did not mean that Abraham should slay his son, why did he order him to do it ?

Aunt. To try his faith ; and this he did to the uttermost. They were three days on their journey, so that Abraham had time to consider of the matter ; but he gave his son wholly up to the Lord ; and the Lord accepted it, and accounted it as done, because it was really done in heart, for the Lord looks at the heart. And the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son ; in blessing I will bless thee ; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.—Now these things may be considered as typical of the mysteries of redemption. Abraham, at God's command, freely gave up his beloved son. God the Father withheld not his only son, but gave him freely to suffer and die for sinners. Isaac herein was a type of Jesus Christ. Isaac at this time was a young man, and might have resisted his father, but he gave himself a willing sacrifice : Christ quitted his Father's throne, and came down from heaven, and actually died an ignominious death to redeem his people.—But we cannot proceed any farther at present.

DIALOGUE IV.

Maria. **P**RAY, aunt, shall we hear any thing more about Isaac?

Aunt. Upon the death of his mother, who died at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven years, his Father wished to settle Isaac, and sent his servant, or steward, to take a wife for his son from among his kindred. And the servant took presents, and ten camels, and went into Mesopotamia. And when he came to the city of Nahor, he prayed to God to direct and prosper him; and the Lord heard his prayer, and made Rebekah willing to go with him. She was the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother; but I would have you read the account at large in Gen. xxiv. Here is a pious servant, who does his master's business with prayer. This is an example for us, in all our ways to acknowledge God, and he will direct our paths.

Maria. But children have nothing to pray for; every thing is provided for them.

Aunt. I know, my dear, you do not so immediately feel your dependence on God, because you know none of the cares and anxieties of life ; but a little consideration will remind you, that in him you live, move, and have your being. Who is it that preserves your health? Who gives you eyes to see, ears to hear, and feet to walk? And who can secure these blessings to you a moment longer? . None but God, on whom you perpetually depend : seek therefore to the Lord for a continuance of the blessings you enjoy, and praise him for all his goodness to you. It is a mercy for us that he condescends to hear us.

When Abraham's servant had obtained Rebekah's consent, he intreated her friends to let him depart. Laban wished his sister to stay with them a few weeks ; but the servant said, Hinder me not, seeing the Lord has prospered my way.

Lucy. I should have been like Laban, not willing to let her go so soon ; sure, he might have staid a week or two ; they could have spent that time in visiting their friends, and taking leave of them.

Aunt. He is an example for all servants to be active in the business they undertake, and to seek their master's interest before their own pleasure or profit. Rebekah being willing to go, they set out on their journey.

journey. Rebekah was accompanied by her nurse and maid servants, and they rode on camels. In the evening, Isaac went out in the fields to meditate. This is an exercise of the mind, which is both pleasing and profitable. The wonders God has wrought, and the kindness he has manifested, in the works of creation and providence, but especially in that of redemption, will ever furnish, to the attentive mind, sufficient materials for contemplation, and the fields are a very proper place for that employ: there we are free from the noise and bustle of the world, and if our hearts are rightly disposed, may learn instruction from every surrounding object. The time which Isaac chose for this purpose is not unworthy our notice; it being, as we have already observed, in the evening. And Isaac lift up his eyes, and saw the camels at a distance: and Rebekah saw him coming towards them; being informed by the servant who he was, she alighted from her camel, and put on her veil. And the servant gave Isaac an account of all that had passed. And he took Rebekah to his mother's tent, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. About this time Abraham also took him a wife, whose name was Keturah, by whom he had six sons; and when they grew up, Abraham gave them

them gifts, and sent them to distant parts to settle, away from his son Isaac, who was to be his heir. Abraham lived to the age of one hundred and seventy-five years, and then died: and his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave, or tomb, where Sarah his wife was buried. Isaac was sixty years of age before he had any children: then he had two together, Esau and Jacob: and it Year of the World 2168. was told Rebekah from the Lord, that the elder should serve the younger. And the boys grew, and Esau was a man of the field.

George. Did he live in the field?

Aunt. No; I do not imagine that was his residence; but he loved hunting, and pursued his pleasures in the field; while Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Lucy. Should not they have loved them both alike?

Aunt. It is certainly very unwise in parents to show a partiality; though I must say, I think Isaac was more blameable than Rebekah; for Jacob feared God; but Esau despised religion, and sold his birth-right to Jacob for a mess of pottage; he likewise married two wives; one, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, the other, the daughter of Elon the Hittite, which were a grief to Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac be-
ing

ing now very old, and supposing his departure near, wishes to bless his sons before he dies, and tells Esau to get him some venison, that he might eat, and his soul should bless him: but Jacob, by his mother's instructions, obtains the blessing from his father, which Isaac designed for Esau.

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Maria. Pray how did they contrive it?

Aunt. Fetch the Bible, and read the 27th chapter of Genesis.

Lucy. I am surpris'd that Jacob should tell such a wilful lie; and, still more, that his mother should put him upon it: surely, aunt, she did not think the same of lies as you do. I remember two or three years ago, I told you a lie, and you were very angry with me: yet that did not convince me of the evil of it; my sorrow was from vexation at being found out. You observed this, took me into your own room, made me kneel down, and prayed to God to forgive me: and thus you convinced me of the evil of lying: but, surely, neither Jacob nor Rebekah thought about God's being angry with them.

Aunt. The mind of God was not so fully revealed in those early days as now: but God discovered his displeasure at their sin in the punishment of it. Rebekah was informed Esau threatened to kill his brother as soon as his father should die, which, no doubt,

doubt, he daily expected : this affliction Rebekah had brought on herself ; but, to prevent the fatal consequences of Esau's rage, she contrived to obtain Isaac's consent to send Jacob to Laban her brother, to get him a wife : and she sent him away secretly, that his brother might not know where he was gone. Thus she parted with her beloved son ; and it does not appear that she ever saw him again. Jacob set off towards Padan-aram : upon the way, it was revealed to him in a vision, what blessings God would bestow on his posterity.

Maria. Had he this vision in his sleep, at an inn ?

Aunt. There were no inns in those days : it was common for persons to receive strangers, and lodge them ; but whether Jacob took an unfrequented path, that his brother might not pursue him ; or whether night came on before he got to any house, I cannot tell : but the ground was his bed, and he took a stone for his pillow.

Maria. What an uncomfortable night he must have !

Aunt. On the contrary, it was a sweet night to him ; for it was at this time that he had that remarkable dream of the ladder, which is generally called, Jacob's Ladder.

Maria.

Maria. I have often heard of Jacob's ladder, but I never rightly understood what was meant by it.

Aunt. It appeared to him to reach from heaven to earth; and he saw the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. This may be considered as a type of Christ, who is the Mediator between God and man; and our Lord himself seems to allude to it, John i. 51, where, speaking to Nathaniel, he says, Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. Besides this vision, the Lord made many precious promises to him, respecting not only his own preservation, but the grant of Canaan to his posterity, and, above all, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed; which had its ultimate accomplishment in the Messiah.

Lucy. Then it must be a sweet night to him!

Aunt. Indeed it was; for, when he waked, he said, Surely God is in this place! And he called the name of the place, Bethel, that is, The House of God. He seems never to have forgotten this manifestation of the divine presence; for we frequently find him, speaking of God, as the God who appeared to him at Bethel. And in the morning he set up a stone of remembrance, declaring, that if he returned in peace, he would build an altar there, where the Lord had appeared unto him. The presence of
God

God would turn the most dreary desert into a garden of delights. When he arrived at Padanaram, he inquired of some shepherds, if they knew Laban; to which they replied in the affirmative, adding, that his daughter Rachel was coming with the sheep to water. Jacob, when he saw Rachel, made himself known to her: upon which she ran and told her father; and he came forth to meet Jacob, and embraced him, and took him to his house; and he abode with him the space of a month. And Laban said unto him, Because thou art my sister's son, shouldst thou serve me for nought? tell me what thy wages shall be. And Jacob loved Rachel, and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. This was consented to, on the part of Laban: but, on the marriage day, Laban contrived to deceive Jacob with his eldest daughter Leah. Here Jacob might see his sin in his punishment; he had deceived Isaac, and now is deceived himself.

Lucy. But what reason did Laban give for acting so?

Aunt. That it was not the custom of their country to give the younger before the elder; but that he should have Rachel also, if he would serve him seven years more, which he willingly consented to, for the love he had for her.

George. Then he had two wives; sure this was displeasing to God!

Aunt. The will of God concerning this matter was not then so fully revealed: you will therefore find, all through the Old Testament, that God manifested his displeasure no otherwise than by the consequences that followed, and the domestic quarrels which it occasioned. A constant unhappiness subsisted between these two sisters: out of vexation to each other, they gave their maid servants to be his wives; so that Jacob had four wives. Leah had six sons, and one daughter; and Bilhah and Zilpah the maid servants had each two sons before Rachel had any: at last she had a son, whom she named Joseph. Jacob was now desirous to depart, and return into his own country, but was persuaded by Laban to serve him six years more for part of his flock; and the Lord blessed him with a great increase. After Jacob had been twenty years in Padanaram, he set out on his journey homewards, with all his family and substance. Now the names of his sons were as follow; Reuben the first born, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, and Joseph. These, with Benjamin, who was born shortly after, are called the patriarchs, being the fathers of the Israelites,

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Israelites, from whom the twelve tribes are denominated.

Lucy. I wonder Laban would part with his daughters.

Aunt. Jacob was afraid he would not; and therefore went without acquainting him, or his brothers-in-law.

Maria. They must be sadly vexed.

Aunt. They were, and pursued after Jacob; but God appeared for him, and, in a dream, told Laban not to molest him. Mark, my dear children, how God protects those that love him: perhaps Laban intended taking his daughters by force from Jacob, but God restrained him; and he was satisfied with taking his leave of them, and blessing them. No sooner was Jacob delivered from this embarrassment, but he had tidings that his brother Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men, and he was much alarmed: he pictured to himself his brother in a rage, slaying the mother with the children; but he carried all his distresses to the Lord, and prayed to him for deliverance; and he obtained a gracious answer. It was on this occasion that God changed his name from Jacob to Israel.

Lucy. Then he had nothing to do, but to wait his brother's arrival, as he was sure of deliverance from his rage.

Aunt. He had a general promise of being blessed, but no particular intimation of the way in which the Lord would deliver him: therefore, the next morning, Jacob sent presents to Esau; and arranged his family in companies: he put the maid servants and their children first, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last.

George. Why did he not let them all go together?

Aunt. Because if Esau slew the first company, the others might escape. And Jacob went forwards, and met his brother, and bowed down to him; and Esau ran to meet Jacob.

Maria. What, to kill him?

Aunt. No; to embrace him; for the Lord had changed his heart towards his brother. And Esau lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and children, and said, Whose are these? Jacob answered, They are the children which the Lord hath graciously given thy servant. Esau made him an offer to accompany him, which Jacob declined accepting, on account of the children and cattle, which could not travel with speed; and they parted amicably. In this journey, Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, died, and in her departing hours, presented him with another son, whom she named Benoni, the son of my sorrow; but this renewing Jacob's grief, he changed it

it to Benjamin, a term which signifies, the son of my right-hand. At length Jacob came to Isaac his father, and dwelt with him. Isaac lived to be one hundred and eighty years of age, and then died; and his sons, Esau and Jacob, buried him.—The next time we meet we shall begin the history of Joseph.

DIALOGUE V.

George. **G**OOD morning to you, aunt. Now for little Joseph.

Aunt. Joseph was of an amiable disposition; and his father loved him more than all his children, and made him a coat of many colours.

Lucy. And that made his brothers hate him?

Aunt. It did so; and he told his father of their evil deeds.

George. But he ought not to have told tales.

Aunt. It does not appear that he did it out of ill-will, but with a view to reclaim them: we ought never to connive at sin though it be in our elders; but his brothers hated him for it, and could not speak peaceably to him.

Lucy. Poor Joseph must have had an uncomfortable life.

Aunt. There is no happiness where brothers and sisters determine to disagree. I hope, my dear children, if envy should arise in your hearts, you will immediately suppress it. If your brother or sister is more caressed than you, you ought to suspect there
is

is something wrong in your conduct. Watch over all your actions, observe wherein you are defective and amend it, and wherein they excel, imitate them.

Lucy. Then, aunt, you think Joseph was more excellent than his brothers.

Aunt. Certainly he was; we have many instances of improper behaviour in them; but Joseph is a character worthy of imitation; I do not recollect any flaw in it, except that there might be a little vanity in telling his brethren his dreams.

George. Pray what were his dreams? Will you be so kind as to relate them to us?

Aunt. He went to his brethren, and said unto them, I have dreamed a dream. We were all binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and stood upright! and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf! And his brethren were angry, and said, Shalt thou indeed reign over us?—And he had another dream which he told his brethren. And, he said, I have dreamed again; and, behold, the sun, moon, and eleven stars made obeisance to me. And his brethren hated him, and called him, The Dreamer. This dream he told his father, who reproved him, and said, Shall I and thy mother and brethren come to bow down to thee? Some time after this, his father

sent him to Shechem, which was about forty miles distant, where his brethren were feeding their flocks.

George. If I had been Joseph I would not have gone ; he knew they hated him.

Aunt. I hope, George, on recollection, you would be willing to follow Joseph's example, who went at his father's command.—As soon as his brethren saw him, when he was yet afar off, they conspired against him, and said one to another, Behold this dreamer cometh ! let us slay him, and cast him into some pit ; and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

Lucy. That was an effectual way to prevent their coming true : but how very wicked ! Poor Joseph, you little thought what a reception you were to meet with !

Aunt. Reuben's heart recoiled at their bloody intention : and he said, Let us not kill him ; shed no blood, but cast him into this pit.

George. But if they had left him there, to perish with hunger, it would have been worse.

Aunt. The design of Reuben was to deliver him, and restore him to his father.—When Joseph came up to them, they seized on him, stripped him of his coat of many colours, and cast him into a pit ; after which they sat down to eat bread.

¶ Maria,

Maria. I have no patience ! I wonder the bread did not choke them ! Why did not God destroy them immediately ?

Aunt. Because God is full of mercy and compassion, therefore he spared these men to repent of their crimes ; and from them arose the tribes of the children of Israel. And Judah beheld some Ishmaelites, that were coming from Gilead, with spicery and myrrh, going down to Egypt ; and he said, Let us not slay our brother, but sell him to these Ishmaelites. And they drew him up out of the pit, and sold him for twenty pieces of silver. In this Joseph was a type of Christ, whom Judas sold for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. What must Joseph's reflections be, thus torn from his beloved father, every prospect of happiness cut off, and himself dragged as a slave into a strange land ! yet this was the first step to his exaltation.

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Maria. But what did his brethren say to his father ?

Aunt. They invented a tale to tell their father : they killed a kid, and dipped poor Joseph's coat in the blood ; then they brought it to their father, and said, Is not this thy son's coat ? And he answered, It is ! some evil beast hath devoured him ! Joseph my son is rent in pieces ! And he mourned for him and wept,

wept, and refused to be comforted.—You see, my dear children, how one sin follows another; therefore avoid the least appearance of evil, and never do any thing you would be ashamed to own.

Lucy. I could almost weep with poor Jacob.

George. Let us leave Jacob to weep. My aunt said, Joseph was to be exalted, I want to know how; for being a slave was not a likely way.

Aunt. God often brings about great events by the most unlikely means. Joseph, who appeared destitute and forsaken, was the peculiar care of Providence, who guided and directed him in all his ways. The Ishmaelites carried him down into Egypt, and sold him to Potiphar, captain of king Pharaoh's guard.

George. If I had been Joseph, I should have done nothing but cry; or else I would have run away!

Aunt. Joseph was not such a little boy as you are: he was at this time about seventeen years of age; and, as it had pleased the Lord to suffer him to be a slave, he served his master with faithfulness, in the fear of God: and he was blessed in all his undertakings. And Potiphar saw that every thing he set his hand unto prospered, and he made him overseer or steward; he had the management of every thing: and his master valued him, seeing the Lord was with him; for the Lord had blessed the house of the Egyptian for Joseph's sake. But he had a very wicked mistress,

mistress, who falsely accused him to Potiphar, by which means he was cast into prison.

George. To prison! What, has the Lord forsaken him? I thought he was to be a great man: to prison! Ah, Joseph, now all your prospect of happiness is over!

Aunt. My dear boy, you are too rash in your conclusions: the Lord had not forsaken Joseph; though in prison, he was supported with the consolation that he had not sinned against his God: and this prison was another step towards his advancement.

George. I now wonder more and more! I had rather be a slave than in prison. Did his master take him out again?

Aunt. No: God by his providence brought it about. God was with Joseph and blessed him, so that he found favour with the keeper of the prison; and he committed all the prisoners to his care. Some time after this, the Butler of the king of Egypt and his Baker offended their lord the king: and he sent them to the prison, where Joseph was; and the keeper committed them to his care. One morning he observed them to look very sadly, and kindly inquired the cause: they said, they had each dreamed a dream, and there was no interpreter. I suppose they alluded to their magicians, whom they could not now apply

to.

to. Joseph said, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you. And the Butler told Joseph his dream, saying; In my dream, behold a vine was before me, having three branches, which bare clusters of ripe grapes; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation: within three days shall the king restore thee to thy place, and thou shalt deliver the cup into the king's hand; but think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness unto me, and make mention of me unto the king; for I have done nothing that they should put me into this dungeon. Then the Baker told his dream, which was to this effect, That he had three white baskets on his head, in the uppermost of which was all manner of bake-meats for Pharaoh, and the birds did eat them out of the basket on his head. And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation: within three days the king will order thee to be hanged on a tree, and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

Lucy. I pity the poor Baker: what shocking tidings! it makes one shudder; he must hope it would not prove true.

Aunt. Doubtless he did; but his hopes were vain: on the third day the king ordered him to be hanged, and restored the Butler to his place.

George.

George. Now poor Joseph will get out of prison, for, to be sure, the Butler will not fail to speak to the king for him.

Aunt. Prosperity often makes men forget those who were their friends in adversity; which was the case with the Butler, who forgot Joseph: so he remained two years longer in prison.

George. And pray, aunt, how did he get out at the end of that time; for I long to hear of his advancement?

Aunt. It was occasioned by two dreams which king Pharaoh had. The king, in his sleep, thought he stood by the river; and there came out of the river seven well-favoured kine, or oxen, fat-fleshed; and they fed in a meadow: and seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill-favoured and lean-fleshed: and the ill-favoured and lean kine did eat up the well-favoured and fat kine. And Pharaoh awoke. And he slept, and dreamed again, to the same purport, of seven ears of corn. In the morning, he sent for the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men, and told them his dreams; but they could not interpret them to the king.

Lucy. Who were the magicians?

Aunt. Men who dealt in divination and enchantments, and pretended to foretel events, by which they

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deceived

deceived the people. You will observe that the Egyptians did not worship the true God.

Lucy. Then whom did they worship?

Aunt. Many Gods, of their own inventing : there were two universally adored, Osiris and Isis, which are thought to be the sun and moon : besides these gods, the Egyptians worshipped a great number of beasts ; as the ox, the dog, the cat, the wolf, the crocodile ; of all these animals, the bull Apis was the most famous. Magnificent temples were erected to him ; extraordinary honours were paid him while he lived, and still greater after his death ; for Egypt went into a general mourning, and the funeral rites were solemnized with much pomp. They even worshipped the leeks and onions which grew in their gardens.

Maria. How very ridiculous ! What a foolish people they must be !

Aunt. In religious matters they certainly were ; for when people have forsaken the true God, there is no absurdity which they will not follow ; but a few years hence, when you come to read Rollin's Ancient History, you will find Egypt was renowned for its government, policy, and learning.—But, to return to our story :

When none were to be found who could interpret the king's dreams, then the chief Butler thought on Joseph, and informed the king of the dream, which

which he himself had in prison, and by whom it was interpreted. Upon this Joseph was immediately sent for; and he changed his raiment, and came in unto king Pharaoh.

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And the king said unto him, I have heard of thee, that thou canst understand dreams. And Joseph answered the king, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. My dear children, mind how Joseph gives God the glory; "It is not in me." He knew he had no more natural wisdom than the Egyptians, and that it was God alone who had made him to differ: he had now been thirteen years in Egypt, in the midst of an idolatrous people, yet he was not ashamed to own the God whom he loved and adored. Then Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams; and Joseph said, The dream of Pharaoh is one; what God is about to do, he hath shewed to Pharaoh. Behold there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt; and after that shall be seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten; for the famine shall consume the land: and the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass: now, therefore, let the king look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt; that he may store up corn against the years of famine, that the people perish not. And Pharaoh said unto his ser-

vants, Is there any like this man, in whom the spirit of God is? And he said unto Joseph, Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And the king took off his ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck, and made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah, priest or prince of On; and Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

George. What a change! I am quite delighted! If I had been Joseph, I should have longed to let my father know what a great man I was.

Aunt. In time God by his providence brought that about; but at present Joseph was fully engaged in the important charge committed to him.

George. What had he to do, but to ride about Egypt in his chariot?

Aunt. He had the care of providing for a whole nation; gathering up a sufficient store in the seven years of plenty, to preserve them from perishing in the famine that was to follow. He certainly was in a very honourable post, being next to the king; but believe me, George, the throne is surrounded with cares: a peasant, with a small portion of land, and a little

little cottage of his own, enjoys more ease and happiness than a prince. Where we have good kings and rulers, we should love and reverence them; though, in my opinion, they are not to be envied.

Lucy. But I think king Pharaoh might live in ease, for he had committed the care of his people to Joseph, and every thing that he did prospered.

Aunt. It did so, my dear, because the Lord was with him: but few kings are blessed with a Joseph. According as Joseph had said, the seven Year of
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2296. years of dearth came on; and the dearth was in all lands. When the people had

expended their own food, they cried unto the king; and he sent them to Joseph, who opened the storehouses, and sold corn to them: so there was bread in all the land of Egypt. And the famine extended to the land of Canaan. Then Jacob said unto his sons, I have heard there is corn in Egypt: get ye down and buy some, that we may live, and not die. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to Egypt to buy corn. But the reception they met with there we must leave till to-morrow.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE VI.

Maria. **I** Wonder whether Joseph knew his brethren when he saw them in Egypt?

Aunt. He immediately recollected them; but made himself strange unto them, and treated them roughly, saying, From whence come ye? They answered, From the land of Canaan, to buy food. And Joseph remembered his dreams; and he said unto them, Ye are spies. They replied, Nay, my Lord, but to buy food are thy servants come; we are all one man's sons; we are true men; thy servants are no spies. And he said, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land are ye come. They said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, and the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

Maria. Whom did they mean, when they said, One is not?

Aunt. They meant Joseph. When Joseph saw only ten of them, he might think they had made away with Benjamin; but when he found he was living, and with his father, he was determined to try their affection towards him, and said unto them, Hereby shall

shall ye be proved; ye shall not go hence, except your youngest brother come hither: send one of you and fetch your brother, that I may prove whether there be any truth in you. And he put them into prison.

George. What did Joseph mean to do with them?

Aunt. On the third day he ordered them to be brought before him: and he said unto them, Let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison; and go ye, and carry corn for your families; but fail not to bring your youngest brother to me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake to them by an interpreter. And he went from them and wept: and he returned to them again, and took Simeon, and bound him before their eyes: and they departed.

Lucy. They had heavy tidings to carry to poor old Jacob.

Aunt. They were quite in the dark why they were thus roughly treated, by the man who was lord of all Egypt. And they told their father all that had befallen them, and that they must not return to Egypt
except

except Benjamin went with them : and their father said, My son shall not go with you ; for his brother is dead, and if mischief should befall him, then shall my grey hairs be brought with sorrow to the grave. And when they opened their sacks, every man's bundle of money was in his sack. When they saw this, both they and their father were afraid. And when the corn was gone, Jacob said, Go again to Egypt, and buy us some food. They answered, If thou wilt not send our brother, we will not go down. And their father said, If it must be so, take your brother ; arise, and go ; God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away Simeon and Benjamin. And they took a present for the lord of the country, and double money, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph ; who, when he saw his brother Benjamin, ordered his steward to take them to his house, and make ready ; for, said he, these men shall dine with me to-day. When they were conducted to Joseph's house they were afraid ; for they did not know what orders Joseph had given, and they thought it was on account of the money which they had found in their sacks.

Maria. What did they do ?

Aunt. Before they entered the house, they told the steward, that they had found their money ; and that they had brought double money ; and he said, Peace

be

be unto you, fear not! I had your money. And he brought Simeon unto them. And when Joseph came home they offered their present, and bowed themselves to him to the earth; and he asked them of their welfare, and of their father, whether he was yet alive? They answered, Our father is in good health. And they bowed down their heads, and did obeisance.

Maria. Now Joseph's dreams are fulfilled.

Lucy. Not till his father has bowed down to him.

Aunt. That is also accomplished; for they at that time represented their father; and when they named their father they bowed down. When Joseph saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he was so affected that he was obliged to retire into his chamber to weep. After he had recovered himself, he returned to his brethren, and dined with them, and they ate and drank, and were merry with him; and in the morning they went away.

George. Now they will have good news to tell their father: how pleased they must be with the entertainment they had met with! I dare say they talked of it all the way home.

Aunt. They were very soon in more distressing circumstances than any they had yet met with: for Joseph had ordered his steward to put his silver cup in Benjamin's sack, and then told him to pursue after the

the men, and when he overtook them, to say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good, in taking my lord's silver cup?

Lucy. What could Joseph mean by all this?

Aunt. His design was to see how they stood affected towards Benjamin, who was now his father's favourite: had he been the object of envy and hatred on that account, they had now a plausible pretence, not only for loading him with accusation and reproach, but for getting rid of him entirely, by consenting to the proposal which Joseph made of leaving him a slave in Egypt, and returning to their father without him. The whole of this transaction shews much wisdom in Joseph, and a deep knowledge of human nature.—But, to proceed:

When the steward overtook them, he immediately accused them of stealing his lord's silver cup: but they, with a conscious innocence, said, God forbid that thy servants should do any such thing! Did not we bring our money back again? how then should we steal out of my lord's house either silver or gold? With whomsoever the cup is found let him die. And the steward searched all their sacks; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they rent their clothes, and were sore distressed, and returned to the city. And when they came to Joseph's house, they bowed before him to the

the ground : and Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done ?

Maria. Did they endeavour to clear themselves ?

Aunt. How could they ? for the fact was plain against them ; the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, and he alone appeared guilty. Judah was distressed above measure, because he had promised to deliver him safe to his father : in this emergency, he addressed Joseph in a most pathetic speech, giving him an account of all that had passed since their first coming to Egypt, and concluded with offering himself to abide instead of Benjamin, as a bondman to Joseph. But when you return home, I would have you read the whole of Judah's speech : you will find it in Gen. xliv. 18, to the end.

Lucy. This must be very affecting to Joseph.

Aunt. But now he had full proof that they were not wanting either in affection for Benjamin, or in respect for their father, whose comfort and welfare seemed to lie so near their hearts. He could no longer restrain the emotion that he felt, but said unto them, I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. And they could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence.

Maria. They must expect him to be very angry.

Aunt. How surprised then must they be, when he said, Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that
you

you sold me hither : for God did send me before you to preserve life : for these two years hath the famine been in the land, and there yet remain five years : but God hath sent me hither, to preserve your lives by a great deliverance.

George. I expected he would tell them what base creatures they had been ; how they intended to murder him ; and that if they had their deserts, they ought all to be hanged.

Aunt. My dear boy, I hope you will never triumph over a conquered enemy, but endeavour to win him to be your friend by a generosity of behaviour like Joseph's, who took them to his own house, and made each of them a present of change of raiment ; but to his own brother Benjamin he gave five changes of raiment and three hundred pieces of silver, and invited them all to come and dwell in Egypt, that he might nourish them and their little ones during the famine.

Lucy. What a charming man Joseph was ! sure his brothers must now love and reverence him, (though his dreams were fulfilled ;) they would not think it beneath them to bow down to such a brother : how they must rejoice in him !

Aunt. Their joy must be embittered by a remembrance of their former guilt. Sin and punishment are inseparably connected ; therefore, if you would be

be happy, beware of sinning. The king heard that Joseph's brethren were come, and sent for Joseph; and when he knew the particulars, he gave Joseph permission to send for his father, and all that he had, and settle them in the best of the land of Egypt. Joseph accordingly provided every thing necessary for the removal of his father's family. And his brethren returned to Canaan, and told their father of all that they had heard and seen.

Lucy. It must appear like a dream to Jacob.

Aunt. He could hardly believe them, till he saw the waggons that Joseph had sent to carry him and his family into Egypt: and then his heart revived; and he said, It is enough; Joseph, my son, is yet alive! I will go and see him before I die.

George. Did they all go?

Aunt. Yes; his children and grandchildren, in all sixty-six persons. On the journey God spake to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will go down with thee, and will there make of thee a great nation.

Maria. Why was he afraid to go into Egypt?

Aunt. His concern for the best interests of his family might lead him to fear they would be drawn away by the pomps and vanities of Egypt, to forsake the true God: but we may safely venture ourselves

in any situation, if God promises to be with us: and we ought not to go into any place or company where we cannot expect the presence and blessing of God to accompany us.—But, to proceed:

Judah went forward to inform Joseph, that his father was coming, upon which Joseph went in his chariot to meet him; and a very affecting interview it was. Joseph fell on his father's neck, and wept a good while; and Israel said, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face. Joseph then conducted them to the land of Goshen, called also the land of Rameses, Gen. xlvii. 11. It was situated in the eastern part of Egypt, being that side that lay nearest to the land of Canaan. And Joseph presented his father and five of his brethren to the king. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before the king. And Joseph placed his father and brethren in the land of Goshen, according as the king had commanded.

Maria. Pray, aunt, did the corn Joseph had stored up last the five remaining years of famine?

Aunt. It did; and the people came to buy till they had no more money: at last, they sold their land for bread; so that all the land became Pharaoh's. In the seventh year Joseph gave the people corn to sow the land, and divided the land in such proportions as he thought fit, reserving the fifth part for Pharaoh. I should think, by the manner in which he acted, that
many

many had formerly been possessed of very large tracks of land, and oppressed their poor neighbours, and that now he made nearly an equal distribution.

Maria. How long did Jacob live in Egypt?

Aunt. Seventeen years. A little before his death he was taken ill; Joseph being informed of it, went to see him, and took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim with him, whom Jacob adopted for his own sons, and blessed them. After this Jacob called all his sons together, and blessed each of them; prophesied the descent of the Messiah in the line of Judah, and then died, aged one hundred and forty-seven years. His son Joseph carried him in great pomp into Canaan, and buried him in the sepulchre of his fathers. The children of Israel continued in Egypt, and grew and multiplied. Joseph on his death-bed prophesied their re-
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Lucy. Shall we hear any more of the children of Israel?

Aunt. At our next meeting we will enter on their history.

DIALOGUE VII.

Aunt. **W**E will now, my dear children, go on with the history of the Hebrews. The patriarchs were all dead, and their children had multiplied exceedingly, so that the land was filled with them: on which account, the Egyptians began to regard them with a jealous eye. And Pharaoh said unto his people, The children of Israel are more and mightier than we; let us deal wisely with them, lest they increase more and more, and in case of a war breaking out should join themselves to our enemies, and so get up out of the land; let us oppress them with hard labour, and set task-masters over them, who shall make them serve with rigour. And this they did, both in the excess of the labour that they required, and the severity of the punishment which they inflicted.

Lucy. Then they were in much the same condition as the poor negro slaves in the West Indies, entirely in the power of their oppressors.

Aunt. They certainly were; but the Almighty appeared for their deliverance, and made their op-

pressors feel the vengeance of his power : and God at this very time takes knowledge of all the oppressions that are done under the sun, and has declared in his word, that he will recompense to every man according to his doings.

George. Was this that Pharaoh who was so good to Joseph?

Aunt. It was not ; Pharaoh was the general name given to all the kings of Egypt.

Maria. But why did not the children of Israel return to Canaan, and not suffer oppression in Egypt?

Aunt. They were now too numerous to go unnoticed ; besides, they had no leader, nor would the Canaanites receive such a body of people : therefore they were under the necessity of staying in Egypt. But, contrary to Pharaoh's expectation, the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and grew.

George. Then this made the impossibility of their return to Canaan the greater.

Aunt. But with God all things are possible : for in about eighty years after this, God brought them out of Egypt with a high hand.

Lucy. But when the king found that oppression did not succeed, why did he not give it up, and let them live in ease?

Aunt. A proud tyrant seldom gives up the object of his pursuit. When one scheme failed he devised another, which he thought would effectually weaken them : he ordered his people to take every son that was born to an Israelite, and cast him into the river ; but told them to save the daughters alive.

Maria. Were the people so cruel as to obey his orders ?

Aunt. They were : and no doubt many infants suffered at this time. Amram, the grandson of Levi, had a son who was born before this decree came forth, whose name was Aaron ; and after this decree he had another son, whom his mother Jochebed hid three months ; and when she could hide him no longer, she made an ark, or basket of bulrushes, and put the child therein ; and she carefully laid it in the flags by the river's brink.

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Lucy. Oh, what must she feel at leaving him !

Aunt. I think when she made the ark, she had strong faith in God, that he would some way or other deliver him ; and the child's sister stood afar off to watch the event. Then Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to wash herself ; and her maidens walked by the river's side. When she saw the ark in the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it ; and when it was opened, she said, This is one of the Hebrew's children.

children. And the babe wept, which excited her compassion, and she determined not to cast this lovely boy into the river: revolving in her mind what she should do with him, she came to the determination to adopt him as her own son. Seeing his sister, not knowing she was the child's relation, she sent her to fetch a Hebrew woman, and she called her mother; and the princess said, Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay thee thy wages.

Lucy. With what joy the mother must receive her dear little boy!

Aunt. When the child was grown, the mother took him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son; and she called his name Moses; and he was brought up in all the learning of the Egyptians.

Maria. Was he ever king over Egypt?

Aunt. No, my dear; the Almighty raised him up to be the deliverer of his people; and he was enabled, by divine grace, to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season. When he was a man, he went out unto his brethren, and was grieved when he looked on their burdens; but his indignation arose when he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren; and he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the

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sand.

sand. It was soon reported to the king what Moses had done ; and he sought to slay him ; but Moses fled into the land of Midian, where he dwelt forty years, with one Jethro, who gave him his daughter to wife, by whom he had two sons. One day, as he was keeping his father's sheep on mount Horeb, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush.

Maria. I am sure I should have been frightened.

Aunt. Moses was astonished, and turned aside to see how it was, that the bush burned and was not consumed. And God called unto him out of the bush, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And God said, I am the God of thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have seen the afflictions of the children of Israel by reason of their task-masters : I know their sorrows, and am come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians, and to bring them to the land of Canaan, which I promised their fathers ; and I will send thee to Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring my people out of Egypt. Moses expostulated with the Lord, as thinking himself unfit for so arduous an undertaking. How, said he, shall I go in unto Pharaoh, who am not eloquent, but slow of speech ? He even questioned whether his brethren would attend
to.

to his message. God, to resolve all his doubts, tells him, what he shall say to the children of Israel, and informs him, that they should hearken to his voice; but that he must expect much opposition from the king of Egypt, who at last would let them go, and that he would give the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, that they should not send them away empty.

Lucy. Surely Moses will believe now!

Aunt. Moses yet doubted whether they would believe him; and he said, They will not hearken unto my voice, but will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee. And the Lord said, What is in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And the Lord bade him cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. Then the Lord told him to take it up by the tail, and it became a rod in his hand.

This certainly tended to strengthen the faith of Moses in the divine Omnipotence; notwithstanding which he still persisted in requesting the Lord to send by another. And the Lord was angry with him, and said unto him, Aaron thy brother can speak well, and, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee; I will be with him, and with thee, and will teach you what you shall do: go, take this rod in thy hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs. And Moses returned to his father-in-law, and informed him that he wished

wished to go to Egypt, to see his brethren ; and Jethro said, Go in peace.

Lucy. But when did Aaron meet him, or how could he know where to find him ?

Aunt. The Lord directed Aaron to meet Moses in the wilderness ; and he met him in the mount of God. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord : and they went and gathered the elders of the people together, and informed them of what God had promised to do for them, and did the signs in the sight of the people : and the people believed, and worshipped the Lord. Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to the king, and thus addressed him ; The Lord God of

Israel hath sent us unto thee with
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2513. this message, Let my people go, that
 they may hold a feast unto me in the
 wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord
 that I should obey his voice ? I know not the Lord,
 neither will I let Israel go. In order to prove their
 divine mission, Aaron, by the direction of Moses,
 cast down the rod, which was in his hand, before
 Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

George. I wonder what the king thought then !

Aunt. He took Moses and Aaron for magicians, and called for his forcerers and magicians ; and they each of them took a rod, and cast it down, and they became serpents.

Lucy.

Lucy How Moses and Aaron must be confounded !

Aunt. Those who trust in the Lord will never be confounded ; for Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians ; but Pharaoh would not hearken unto them, and they departed. And God ordered Moses to meet Pharaoh on the morrow, as he went to the river, and to say to him, Thus saith the Lord, In this shalt thou know that I am the Lord ; behold I will smite the rivers, and the waters shall be turned into blood. And Moses stretched his rod over the rivers, and they became blood.

Lucy. How very horrible it must look ! it makes one shudder !

Aunt. The effects must have been still more distressing.

Maria. Then they could only have rain water to drink.

Aunt. Rain is very rare in Egypt : the river Nile overflows its banks regularly every year from June to September, and leaves a rich manure all over the country, so that the Egyptians even idolized their river Nile. In this punishment God also brought their sins to remembrance : they had cruelly cast the children of the Israelites into the river, and now the river itself is turned into blood : this river in which they gloried is become their terror.

Maria. But could the magicians turn water into blood ?

Aunt.

Aunt. They found some water in pools, which the mercy of God had spared them, and instead of receiving it with thankfulness, they added to the calamity by turning it into blood: this tended to harden Pharaoh's heart; and he turned and went to his house.

George. What did the fishes do? could they live in blood instead of water?

Aunt. The fishes died, and the rivers became loathsome: this lasted seven days. And God sent Moses again to Pharaoh, to inform him, if he refused to let the people go, he would send frogs, in such abundance, that they should be in their houses, on their tables, and on their beds.

Maria. I am sure I would have let them go.

Aunt. But the king was determined to stand it out with God. And Aaron, according to the word of the Lord, stretched out his rod over the rivers; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt; and the magicians, with their enchantments, brought up frogs.

Lucy. Would it not have been wiser in them to have sent them away?

Aunt. They could do nothing but by the permission of God, who suffered them only to produce those effects, which tended to increase the calamity; but, in a short time, he was pleased to put an
end

end to their enchantments. The frogs were so troublesome, that this proud monarch, who defied God, was obliged to humble himself so far as to send for Moses and Aaron, to beg of them to intreat the Lord to take away the frogs from him and his people, with a promise that he would let Israel go and serve the Lord. And Moses said, To-morrow the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, that thou mayest know that there is none like the Lord our God.

George. He must let them go now, because he has promised it.

Aunt. When Pharaoh found he had respite, he regarded not his word, and would not let them go. The next plague the Lord sent was lice. The dust of the earth became lice, on man and beast: the magicians used their enchantments, but could not bring forth lice. Here ended all their vain attempts to fight against God: and they said to Pharaoh, This is the finger of God. And the Lord sent Moses again unto Pharaoh to tell him, Thus saith the Lord, If thou wilt not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy people, and thy houses shall be full of them; and I will put a division between my people and thy people, and I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, and there shall be no swarms of flies

there; to the end that thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. The wisdom of God appears very conspicuous in the kind of judgments with which he thought proper to punish this haughty tyrant, as they were peculiarly adapted to mortify the pride of his heart: had the Lord sent lions or tigers in large droves to devour the Egyptians, or armies of victorious enemies to subdue them, Pharaoh, though crushed, would have appeared of some consequence; but it rendered him extremely insignificant to be vanquished by such contemptible creatures as lice and flies, whom he could neither escape nor oppose. Thus the Almighty can humble the proudest of men! The king again sends for Moses and Aaron, to intreat the Lord to remove this plague also, with promises as before; but, when the flies were gone, his heart was hardened, and he would not let the people go. Then the Lord sent a mortality among the cattle, by which numbers were swept off. And Pharaoh sent to see if the cattle of the children of Israel were safe; and behold, there was not one dead; yet his heart was hardened. The next plague was a boil on man and beast, which so affected even the magicians themselves, that they could not stand before Moses; yet Pharaoh would not yield.

Lucy.

Lucy. Every additional plague that was inflicted, seems in some respect or other more dreadful than the preceding.

Aunt. It was so; for though the former ones had teased, distressed, and impoverished the Egyptians, yet their health and their persons had hitherto been untouched; but now the judgments of God make a nearer approach, and assume a more terrible aspect. And the Lord sent hail mingled with fire, which smote all that was in the field, both man and beast; but in the land of Goshen there was no hail. And Pharaoh sent again for Moses and Aaron, to intreat the Lord for him, and promised as before; but when the storm of hail and thunder ceased, Pharaoh sinned yet more and more; still refusing to let the people go. And the Lord sent Locusts all over the land, which did eat up the herbs that the hail had left. And Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you: forgive, I pray you, my sin only this once, and intreat the Lord to take away from me this death.

George. Surely now he relents, he will let them go.

Aunt. In this man you see a picture of ungodly men in all ages: when the afflicting hand of God is upon them, then they will call upon their religious

friends to intreat the Lord for them ; but when the affliction is removed, they forget the hand that smote them, and, like Pharaoh, sin yet more and more, till the measure of their iniquities is filled up. Pharaoh still persisted in his resolution of not letting the Israelites go : and the Lord sent a thick darkness over the land of Egypt, which lasted three days : they saw not one another, neither rose any one from his place for three days.

Lucy. Why could not they have candles or lamps ?

Aunt. This darkness is supposed to have been occasioned by a thick clammy fog, that extinguished all the lights, or at least rendered them useless ; and prevailed to so great a degree, that the meridian sun could not penetrate the gloom ; so that day and night were alike to them : it was a darkness that might be felt in the pain which it excited, attended, no doubt, with extreme horror of mind, under a consciousness of having, by their sins, brought upon themselves these tremendous judgments. At the same time the children of Israel had light in all their dwellings. This is a lively representation of what God's people experience in all ages ; they have light in their dwellings, even that light which enlightens the mind, by which it is instructed in the knowledge of God, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, while

while all the rest of the world are in darkness and ignorance.

Lucy. When the Egyptians were in total darkness, would it not have been a fine opportunity for the children of Israel to have marched off; their enemies not being able to pursue them?

Aunt. But it was not the Lord's pleasure that they should go forth as abject fugitives, but as triumphant conquerors.

George. In what manner could that be brought about?

Aunt. God inflicted one more plague on the Egyptians, which so frightened them, that the king hurried them away. We shall not have time to go any farther now.

DIALOGUE VIII.

Maria. I Hope, aunt, you will not be angry with us, when I tell you, we were so impatient to know what the last plague was, that we took the Bible to see if we could find it.

Aunt. So far from being angry, I am quite pleased; for my intention in these conversations is to excite you to search the Scriptures ; but did you succeed ?

Maria. It was the death of the first born : we found it in the 11th chapter of Exodus.

Aunt. Did you read any more than that chapter ?

Maria. No, Madam.

Aunt. Then we will proceed. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, and appointed a lamb to be killed for each house of the children of Israel : they were to kill it in the evening, and take of the blood, and strike on the side-posts of the door of each house : they were to roast it whole ; not a bone of it was to be broken ; they were to eat it with bitter herbs ; and none of them were to stir out of the door of his house till morning.

Lucy. What was the meaning of this ?

Aunt.

Aunt. The blood that was sprinkled on the doorposts was a token to the destroying angel to pass by that door : and this passover was to be commemorated every year, on the same day of the month ; that when their children should ask them in time to come, they should say, This is in remembrance of the Lord's passover ; who passed over the houses of the children of Israel, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses. But this paschal lamb was typical of the lamb of God, who was slain from the foundation of the world. At midnight the destroying angel passed over Egypt, and smote all the first-born, from the highest to the lowest, according to the word of Moses : there was not a house in Egypt where there was not one dead. The king himself was not exempt. The pride, hopes, and comfort of every family were destroyed. Thus the Egyptians were righteously punished for murdering the children of the Israelites. The king called for Moses and Aaron by night, and gave them leave to go, and take all that they had with them. And the Egyptians hastened their departure, and gave them whatever they asked ; jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment : thus they spoiled the Egyptians.

Lucy. But was it right to do so in the time of their distress ?

Aunt.

Aunt. They had in reality no more than was their due; and what they did was by the command of God. You remember what hard bondage they had suffered, even to make bricks without straw. When the judgments of the Lord came on the Egyptians, they were so terrified that they said, We be all dead men: and they denied them nothing, so they would but depart. Thus God forced the Egyptians to give them their wages; for they had served them for nought. And the children of Israel journeyed to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men, besides women and children; and there was not one feeble person among their tribes. A mixed multitude also went with them, and large flocks and herds of cattle.

Maria. Who were the mixed multitude?

Aunt. Egyptians and foreigners, who had been struck with the wonders of the Lord. Many, it is probable, followed them out of curiosity, to see what would become of this extraordinary people, in whose favour such miracles had been wrought.

George. Did they go directly to Canaan?

Aunt. They were in no condition to engage in war, which they must immediately have done, had they, pursuing the nearest route, gone through the land of the Philistines; but God led them about through the wilderness of the Red Sea.

Maria.

Maria. Was there no danger of their being lost in a wilderness ?

Aunt. Not the least, when God was their guide : his presence went before them.

Maria. Could they see God ?

Aunt. God is not visible to mortal eyes ; but the token of his presence went before them, to guide them in the way ; in a pillar of a cloud by day, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light.

Luty. How rejoiced they must be that they had escaped from Pharaoh !

Aunt. Without doubt they were ; but their rejoicing was soon turned into astonishment ; for it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled ; and he repented that he had let them go : he therefore immediately ordered his army out, with six hundred chosen chariots, and captains over every one of them. Now, my dears, you will understand, these were not chariots of state but of war ; they used to fix long scythes on the sides of them, or the axle-tree ; and the captains fought with arrows or javelins ; thus, as they drove on, they cut or mowed down all before them.

George. What havock those chariots must make among such a multitude !

Aunt. The Egyptians came up with them, at a time when they were in the most critical situation any people

people could possibly be in : they were encamped at Pi-hahiroth ; the sea was before them, and impassable mountains on either side.

Lucy. What very great distress they must be in ! If they look forward a watery grave presents itself ; if backward, they rush on those horrid chariots ; then what way of escape could there be ?

Aunt. Apparently there was none ; and no doubt but this made the Egyptians triumph, as sure of subduing them, being thus hemmed in on every side ; but there was one way open, which the Egyptians knew nothing of.

George. How could that be, when they were inclosed every way ?

Aunt. It was upward.

Maria. Did they fly away ?

Aunt. No ; they looked upward, and cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard them. And Moses said, Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of God. And the Lord said unto Moses, Command the children of Israel to go forward : but stretch thou thine hand over the sea, and divide it : and Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And the angel of God, who went before the camp of the Israelites, removed and went behind them. Thus the cloud stood between the two camps, and was darkness to the one, while it gave light to the other, all night ;

night; so that they could not come near to hurt or destroy. Had not Pharaoh and the Egyptians been hardened in iniquity, such a remarkable interposition of Providence, added to the preceding ones in favour of Israel, must have deterred them from the pursuit: but they seemed obstinately bent upon their own destruction. And the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and divided the waters, so that the sea became dry land. And the children of Israel went into the sea on dry ground, and the waters were a wall on their right hand, and on their left.

George. Was it wider than the river Thames?

Aunt. You can hardly, my dear children, form any conception of it: the Red Sea is supposed to have been about sixteen miles broad at this part. I know you are eager to read any book that has wonderful stories in it; but where will you find any thing to equal this? thousands and thousands of men, women and children, walking in the midst of the sea on dry ground. The Bible is full of wonders. The Psalmist says, Talk ye of all his wondrous works; and if our hearts were but more disposed to contemplate these divine records, we should find new wonders every time we read them.

Lucy. How astonished the Egyptians must be to see a path made for the Israelites in the sea!

Aunt.

Aunt. But instead of standing still, and contemplating the wonders of the Lord, they madly pursued after them into the sea. And the Lord looked at the Egyptians through the cloud, and troubled them, and put them in confusion; for their chariot-wheels came off, so that they drove on heavily: and they said, Let us flee, for the Lord fighteth for Israel against us. And when Israel had passed over, the Lord commanded Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea, that the waters might return, and he did so; and the sea returned, and overwhelmed all the host of the Egyptians; so that not one that came into the sea escaped. Now, what did their chariots avail? they could not resist the impetuosity of the returning waves; but chariots, horses and men, sank as lead in the mighty waters. And the Israelites saw the Egyptians dead on the sea shore. On this occasion, Moses composed a song of praise to the Lord. This is the first Ode we meet with in the Scriptures, and may be considered as a model of sacred poetry. I would have you read it before our next meeting; you will find it in *Exod. xv.* From the Red Sea they went into the wilderness of Shur: but I fear it will be tedious to your young minds to follow them in all their marches in the wilderness.

George. Were they a long time before they got to the land of Canaan?

Aunt. They were forty years.

Lucy. They must meet with many remarkable things during that time; we hope, aunt, you will give us some account of them.

Aunt. I will comply with your request in as concise a manner as I can.

George. I cannot think how it could be possible for such a vast multitude to subsist so many years in a barren wilderness, where they could neither plant nor sow.

Aunt. Nor were they to kill the beasts for food; yet God provided for them.

George. In what manner?

Aunt. By his miraculous power exerted in their behalf, as you will see in the sequel. It was but three days after their passage through the Red Sea, before they murmured against God, who had made them a path in the deep, and had triumphed gloriously over their enemies. When they came to Marah and found the waters were bitter, they murmured against Moses.

Maria. But that was not against God.

Aunt. Yes, it was; for Moses was appointed their leader and lawgiver by God: Moses could not give them water when there was none; God alone could do that; therefore in murmuring against him, they murmured against God. These things are recorded for our warning.

Lucy. But we are not in the same situation; we have no Moses to murmur against.

Aunt. Parents, tutors, and ministers, are, under God, to you, what Moses was to the children of Israel; to lead you, and guide you in the paths of righteousness; and disobedience to them, while discharging their duty in the fear of God, is no other than rebellion against God himself, by whose authority they act.—But, to return to our history:

Moses cried unto the Lord, and the Lord shewed him a tree, which he cast into the waters, and they became sweet. Then they journeyed into the wilderness of Sin, where they met with new difficulties; their provisions being expended, they again murmured against Moses and Aaron: and Moses cried to the Lord; and in the evening, the Lord brought quails in abundance, which covered the camp.

George. What are quails?

Aunt. A sort of flying fowls: the Lord also gave them bread from heaven.

Maria. Was it like our bread?

Aunt. It was a small round thing like hoar-frost, and covered the ground: and when the children of Israel saw it, they said, It is manna: but Moses said, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. And they gathered it every day; but if they kept it above one day it corrupted, and became unfit

to

to be eaten. This was to teach them and us, to trust the Lord for our daily bread.

Lucy. Did they eat it just as they found it?

Aunt. They made it into cakes or loaves, and baked them; but on the sixth day Moses commanded them to take a double quantity, because the seventh day was the sabbath, and was to be kept holy: they were not to attend to the ordinary concerns of this life, as on other days, but to keep it wholly unto the Lord: and no manna fell on the sabbath day. And they journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, and came to Rephidim; where there was no water. And the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink: they were even ready to stone him. In this extremity, Moses cried unto the Lord, who commanded him to take the rod, with which he had wrought so many miracles in Egypt, and smite a rock on mount Horeb. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And the Lord opened the rock, and the waters gushed out, so that they ran in the dry places like a river. The name of this place was called *Massah* and *Meribah*, because it was here that the children of Israel did tempt the Lord, and chide with Moses.

DIALOGUE IX.

Aunt. **W**HILE the Israelites were at Rephidim, the Amalekites, who inhabited the neighbouring country, came against them; upon which, Joshua, at the command of Moses, took a chosen body of men, with whom he fought the Amalekites, and obtained a complete victory over them. During the continuance of the combat, Moses stood on the top of a hill, with his hands lifted up to God, which, being connected with the success of the battle, may be considered as a token of the prevalence of prayer, and also as a type of the intercession of Christ. And the Lord said unto Moses, I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it JEHOVAH-NISSI, which signifies, The Lord my banner.

About this time, or soon after, Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, came to pay him a visit, having heard of all the wonders which God had wrought for Israel. Observing the very great fatigue which Moses endured from day to day in judging the people,

ple, Jethro advised him to select able men to assist him in that arduous employ. Moses, perceiving the propriety of this advice, being also peculiarly directed of God, chose out persons of capacity and integrity, to whom he committed the judgment of the people in ordinary concerns, reserving to himself the decision of more important and difficult causes. And the Israelites removed and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and pitched before Mount Sinai. And Moses went up to God.

Maria. What ! to heaven ?

Aunt. No ; into the mount, where the Lord made a visible appearance. And the Lord spake to Moses out of the mount, commanding him to remind the people of the great things he had done for them ; promising, if they would keep his covenant, that they should be a peculiar treasure unto him above all people of the earth. And God said unto Moses, Go down and prepare the people against the third day, when I will descend in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak unto thee, and believe thee for ever ; but set bounds, that none approach near the mount.

George. How did God appear ?

Aunt. In awful majesty, which made all the people tremble ; for, on the third day, there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the

mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the lower part of the mount: for mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the whole mount quaked greatly. When the trumpet sounded long, and was louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses went up.

Lucy. But how could Moses go into the midst of the fire, and not be consumed?

Aunt. You will recollect, my dear, that God's appearing to Moses at first was in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush, which, though burning, was not consumed, because the Lord was there: Moses was, therefore, under no apprehension of danger in complying with the call of God: nor need we be afraid in any situation, if we have but the presence of the Lord with us, and are conscious of acting in obedience to his commands.

And God spake all the words of the ten commandments with an audible voice, so that all the Israelites could hear them with the greatest distinctness; but afterwards God talked with Moses alone, and then sent him down to deliver the messages to the people: for the thunderings and lightnings from the
mount

mount filled many with such consternation, that they knew not how to sustain it: and they were afraid, and stood afar off.

Maria. I should have been so frightened that I should have run quite away.

Aunt. My dear child, there is no fleeing from the Almighty; and that the people knew: and they said to Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses encouraged them to trust in the Lord; and he left them, and drew near to the thick darkness, where God was. And the Lord gave Moses divers laws, with punishments annexed to the breach of them, and glorious promises to those who obeyed them; and the people promised obedience. And Moses went up into the mount again, and was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

Maria. The people must almost despair of seeing him again.

Aunt. But what will you think of their ingratitude? When they found Moses did not return, they went to Aaron, and said, Make us gods, which shall go before us, for this Moses, that brought us out of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.

Lucy. I cannot bear them! with what contempt they speak of Moses, who had been such a friend to them!

Aunt. And what is worse still, they renounced God, and gave Aaron their golden earrings to make them a calf, and then said, These are thy gods, O Israel. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to their new god, and sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee down; for thy people have corrupted themselves; and have turned quickly out of the way that I commanded them; therefore, let me alone that my wrath may be executed upon them, that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

George. If I had been Moses I would not have let this opportunity slip of getting rid of such a murmuring people: he might have been fully revenged of them for talking of stoning him.

Aunt. Moses was so far from resenting their ill usage towards him, that he interceded for them in the most pathetic language: he reminded God of his promises, and besought him to turn away his wrath from them; and the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. The wicked are often indebted for their preservation to those whom they despise; for the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. And God ordered Moses to go down, and take with him the two tables of the testimony, on which were written the ten commandments:

mandments : the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God. And when Moses was coming down from the mount, he saw the calf, and the dancing of the people round it; and his indignation arose to that degree, that he cast the tables out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mount, thereby testifying to all the people that they had, by their disobedience, renounced their covenant with God, and were utterly unworthy of his regard. And Moses took the calf, and destroyed it. And he stood in the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi came unto him; and he said unto them, This is what the Lord God of Israel commandeth you, Take every man his sword, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man that adheres to idolatry. And there fell of the people about three thousand men. And Moses returned unto the Lord, to beseech him to pardon his people. And the Lord said, Go, and lead this people unto the place, which I have spoken to thee of; and my angel shall go before thee; for I will no more go up in the midst of thee. And when the people heard these evil tidings they mourned. At length, upon the intercession of Moses, and the solemn humiliation of the people, the Lord was pleased to renew the visible token of his presence, in the cloudy

cloudy pillar, which had for a time been suspended, graciously assuring them of the continuance of his favour and protection.

Lucy. With your permission, aunt, I would just ask one question.

Aunt. It gives me pleasure, my dear child, to find that you think on what you hear. I shall be happy to solve your question: what is it?

Lucy. Moses was forty days and forty nights in the mount; and in all that time did God give him only the ten commandments?

Aunt. During that time God gave Moses instructions to make a tabernacle, and commanded the children of Israel to give such and such offerings of gold and silver and precious stones: he likewise gave directions for making a sanctuary, that God might dwell among them: they were also to make an ark, which was a chest of wood, overlaid with gold, in which the law and other sacred things were deposited. This was put in the sanctuary, or most holy place, within the tabernacle. And God appointed priests, and set apart Aaron and his sons for that office.

Lucy. What was the business of the priests?

Aunt. To offer sacrifices, and to make intercession for the people, whom they were also to instruct in the laws of God.

Maria.

Maria. What is meant by sacrificing ?

Aunt. To sacrifice is to offer up, to kill, or destroy.

George. What did they sacrifice ?

Aunt. Bullocks and lambs.

Lucy. But for what purpose was this ?

Aunt. To make a *typical* atonement for their sins ; for without shedding of blood there is no remission, or forgiveness of sin.

Lucy. Then how are our sins to be forgiven, for we do not kill lambs or bullocks to make an atonement.

Aunt. By application to the Lamb of God, who offered himself a willing sacrifice, and by one offering made *complete* atonement for all his chosen redeemed people.

Maria. I do not understand who the Lamb of God is.

Aunt. Jesus Christ the Son of God. All the sacrifices under the Jewish dispensation were typical of Christ : and those who had faith in the promised Messiah looked through the type to the antitype : for the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin.

Lucy. Pray, aunt, what did Moses do when he had broken the tables ?

Aunt. Moses went again into the mount, and was there forty days and forty nights ; and God renewed his

his covenant with his people. And Moses came down with new tables; and his face shone, so that Aaron and all the children of Israel were afraid: and he put on a veil; but when he went into the the tabernacle before the Lord, he took it off. The Lord spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend; and if the children of Israel had any matter they brought it unto Moses, and Moses carried it unto the Lord. When you come to read at large the whole law, both moral and ceremonial, it will excite your astonishment, that He, who dwelleth in the highest heavens, should notice the actions of man, even to the minutest incidents of life. While the children of Israel continued in the wilderness of Sinai, God commanded Moses to number them according to their tribes.

George. What was the number of them?

Aunt. The men only that were fit for war were six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty.

Lucy. With women and children, what a vast company they must be!

Aunt. And yet, great regularity was observed in their camp: for each tribe pitched their tents by their own standard. It was now a year since the passover was first instituted at their quitting Egypt, and, at the command of God they kept a second. On the day
that

that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. At the command of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at his command they pitched their tents; and when the cloud was taken up, whether by night or day, they journeyed.

Maria. How did they remove the Tabernacle?

Aunt. That was so constructed as to be easily taken down and set up; and the ark was carried on staves by the Levites. And Israel journeyed out of the wilderness of Sinai, and came, under the direction of the cloud, to the wilderness of Paran; where we must leave them for the present.

DIALOGUE X.

Lucy. I Should think the Israelites must be so happy under the immediate guidance of Providence, that they would hardly wish to get to Canaan.

Aunt. They were not sensible of the value of their privileges, though they were fed with bread from heaven ; for, instead of being thankful for the miraculous provision God had made for them, their souls loathed the manna. And Moses heard the people weep throughout their families : and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly ; Moses also was displeased. On this occasion, though he was the meekest of men, he spoke peevishly unto the Lord, saying, Whence should I have flesh to give all this people ? for they say unto me, Give us flesh that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone ; it is too heavy for me ; if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, and let me not see my wretchedness.

Lucy. I tremble for Moses : I fear God will be angry with him !

Aunt.

Aunt. God saw his difficulties, and the anguish of his soul. And he ordered Moses to choose seventy of the elders, to bear the burden with him. And the Lord commanded Moses to tell the people, (as they had said, Who shall give us flesh to eat) The Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat, not only one or two days, but a whole month, till ye loathe it. Moses himself was at first astonished at what he was commissioned to tell them; and he said unto the Lord, The people are six hundred thousand men: shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them? or, shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together, to suffice them? But the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass or not. And the Lord caused the wind to blow, and brought up quails, and let them fall in great multitudes round about the camp. And the people gathered all that day and night, and the next day. But the Lord was angry with them, and smote them with a very great plague; so that they loathed the flesh which they had so earnestly desired; and many died. And the people journeyed to Hazeroth, where they abode some time.

By God's command, and at the request of the people, Moses chose out twelve men, a ruler out of each tribe, to go and search

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the land of Canaan; and they were forty days before they returned. At the brook of Eshcol they cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; and it was so large, that they bore it between two on a staff: they brought also of the pomegranates and of the figs; and came to Moses and Aaron, and all the congregation.

Maria. How the people must throng about them to hear what report they brought!

Aunt. Undoubtedly they did. And the rulers shewed them the fruit, and said, It is a land flowing with milk and honey; but, they added, the people that dwell in the land are strong, and the cities walled exceeding high: the Amalekites dwell in the south; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coasts of Jordan. Upon this the people grew tumultuous; but two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, endeavoured to still them, saying, Let us go up and possess the land; for we are well able to overcome it: but the men that went with them persisted in it, that they were not able. And they brought up an evil report of the land, saying, that the men which they saw were large, and of great stature; and that they saw giants there, in whose sight they appeared as grasshoppers. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron,

Aaron, saying, Would God we had died in Egypt, or would God we had died in this wilderness: wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should be a prey? let us make a captain and return into Egypt. And when Joshua and Caleb heard this, they were exceedingly grieved: and they spake unto all the company, saying, Rebel not against the Lord, neither fear ye the people; for their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us. And all the congregation cried out, Stone them with stones. But the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle before them all. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs and wonders which I have shewn them? I will smite them and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they.

Maria. Surely Moses will not pray for them again.

Aunt. The glory of God was dearer to him than his own interest or honour; therefore he supplicated and pleaded with the Lord, that for his own name's sake, he would pardon this people: and the Lord heard his supplications on their behalf, so as not utterly to cast them off. You see, my dear children, what prevalence prayer has with God.

Lucy. But he was a very holy man, and a prophet of the Lord.

Aunt. He was, but it was God that made him so, and we have sufficient encouragement to follow his example ; for the Lord is a God hearing and answering prayer, of which we have innumerable instances in the scripture. Never, my dear children, on any occasion, neglect prayer.

Maria. But when I have been naughty, I am afraid to pray to God, for I think he will be angry with me.

Aunt. And do you think God will be better pleased with you for never seeking his forgiveness ?

Maria. No, aunt ; but I am ashamed to tell God how very wicked I am.

Aunt. But, my dear child, the Lord knows every secret thought of your heart : you cannot fly from God ; but you may go to him as Moses did, and plead with him to pardon you, reminding him of his own word, which says, He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy. Prov. xxviii. 13.

George. Then God did not punish the Israelites.

Aunt. God visited their iniquities with stripes, and their transgressions with a rod ; nevertheless, his loving-kindness he did not utterly take from them, or from their offspring ; but manifested it more
espe-

especially to their children, which, they said, should be a prey. Them, said the Lord, will I bring to that land which ye have despised; but, as for you, your carcases shall fall in this wilderness: and your children shall wander therein forty years, till all this congregation, except Caleb and Joshua, be consumed and die. A plague immediately succeeded, of which the ten spies, who brought up the evil report, as well as many of the people, died. And the people mourned greatly: and they rose early in the morning, and presented themselves unto Moses and Aaron, and said, We will go up to the place which the Lord hath promised; but Moses commanded them not to go, telling them, that if they did, they would be smitten before their enemies, for the Lord was not on their side; yet they presumed to go.

George. What a strange people! When Joshua and Caleb wanted them to go up, they were so enraged as to talk of stoning them: but now they are not afraid to go, even if the Lord is not with them.

Aunt. True, my dear. But though they would make the attempt, Moses, and the ark of the covenant, which was the symbol of God's presence, departed not out of the camp.

Lucy. What was the consequence of this rash undertaking?

Aunt.

Aunt. Their defeat by the Amalekites and Canaanites. Soon after this, another rebellion broke out: the authors were Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with two hundred and fifty of the princes. They gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron, and upbraided them with taking too much upon them, telling them that the congregation was holy as well as they.

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Maria. What did Moses do in this affair?

Aunt. He left the decision to the Lord; and told Korah and all his company, who were of the tribe of Levi, to whom God had already given the charge of the tabernacle, that on the morrow the Lord would show who was holy, and who was his, saying unto them, Seemeth it a small thing to you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle, to bring you near to himself, and seek ye the priesthood also? but this do, take every man of you censers, and put fire therein, and incense in them, and bring them before the Lord; even thou and Aaron, each of you his censer. Moses sent also to call Dathan and Abiram; who returned a most insolent message, in which they absolutely refused to obey the summons. And Korah gathered the people unto the door of the tabernacle. And the glory of the Lord appeared. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying,
Separate

Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. And Moses and Aaron fell on their faces, saying, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation? And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto the people, that they get them up from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Moses intreated them to depart from the tents of these wicked men; so they gat them up from their tents on every side. And the earth opened, and swallowed them up, and their tents, and all that appertained to them.

Maria. I hope they had no children.

Aunt. These men were parents, and involved their children in the same ruin: their wives, their sons, and little children were with them at their tent doors; and they all went down alive into the pit. And all Israel fled at the cry of them, fearing lest the earth should swallow them up also.

George. How frightened I should be if my friends were wicked! I should expect the earth would swallow us up.

Aunt. My dear George, you cannot be too thankful that you have good examples set before you; but your friends cannot save you; for there are with you, young as you are, sins against the Lord your God.

George.

George. Then, what can I do?

Aunt. Commit yourself unto God, who is able to save all that put their trust in him: for he hath said, Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Psal. xxxiii. 10.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XI.

Aunt. I Shall surprife you, my dear children, by informing you, that it was only the day after that tremendous judgment, which I related to you in our laft converfation, that the Ifraelites reproached Mofes and Aaron, faying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord.

Maria. I am almoft tired with hearing of their wickednefs. I wonder God would bear with them!

Aunt. Their vilenefs is recorded, to manifefl the long-fuffering of God, and to fhew that he is ready to forgive repenting finners; though his anger may be kindled againft them, as it was againft Ifrael at this time. And he faid unto Mofes and Aaron, Get ye up from this people, that I may confume them in a moment. And Mofes knew that the Lord had fent a plague among them: and he faid unto Aaron, Go quickly into the camp and make atonement for them: and Aaron did fo: and he flood between the dead and the living; and the plague

plague was stayed. Now they that died of the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred.

George. What a vast number !

Lucy. But God would have destroyed them all, if Moses and Aaron had not interceded for them.

Aunt. Wicked people do not consider how much they are indebted to the godly for the preservation of their lives : for the Lord often withholds judgments in answer to the prayers of his people.

In order to put an end to their murmurings about the priesthood, the Lord wrought a miracle. He commanded Moses to take twelve rods, a rod for each prince of a tribe ; their names were to be written on each, and the name of Aaron was to be upon that for the tribe of Levi ; and Moses laid up the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle. On the morrow, Moses went into the tabernacle, and brought forth the rods ; and Aaron's rod had budded, blossomed, and yielded almonds ; for the Lord had said, The man whom I shall choose, his rod shall blossom. And it was laid up as a token against the rebels.

From this time little or nothing is recorded of the Israelites, for the space of about thirty-seven years, when, after various marches, and counter marches in the wilderness, they were brought once more to the borders of the Holy Land. In refer-

once

ence to this period, Moses composed, what is now called, the 90th Psalm, entitled, A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God, which I would have you read at your leisure. It breathes a spirit of ardent devotion, and exhibits a striking picture of the frailty of human nature.

Lucy. I thought the Psalms were written by David.

Aunt. The greater part of them were composed by him, at different times, and on different occasions. These, with other devout compositions, written by men who were inspired of God, were collected together, and placed in the order in which they now stand (as it is generally supposed) by Ezra, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity.

Lucy. I hope we shall hear no more now of the murmurings of the Israelites. I should think they must have seen enough to convince them of the evil of rebellion and disobedience to God.

Aunt. No outward dispensation, either of mercy or judgment, will effectually convince men of sin, or produce true repentance towards God, unless accompanied with the influences of his Spirit to the heart. The conduct of the Israelites affords a sufficient proof of this; for, notwithstanding the various displays they had seen of the power of God,

both to preserve and punish; they no sooner found a want of water, than they murmured again.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, Take ye the rod; and speak unto the rock, and it shall bring forth water. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock; and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock? And he smote the rock twice, and the water came out abundantly.

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Lucy. Moses appears quite angry with the people now.

Aunt. Though the meekest of men, yet on this occasion he spake unadvisedly with his lips. And the Lord was displeased with him and Aaron; for the Lord had commanded Moses only to speak to the rock, whereas Moses struck it twice. And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

Maria. Poor Moses and Aaron! I should have broken my heart with vexation.

Aunt. Moses and Aaron bore with patience the indignation of the Lord, because they had sinned against him.

George. How long did they live after this?

Aunt. Aaron lived but a short time. And Israel journeyed from Kadesh, and came to mount Hor, by the coast of Edom. And the Lord told Moses that Aaron should die in that mount, and ordered him to take Aaron and his son Eleazar to the top of the mount, and there to strip Aaron of his priest's garments, and put them on his son. And Aaron died on the top of the mount; and Moses and Eleazar came down.

Lucy. Poor Aaron! to be stripped and die! and what must Moses feel, when he knew he must soon follow?

Aunt. Aaron was not in a pitiable condition: he must rejoice that he had a son, to whom he could with comfort and satisfaction resign his office: and his death was no loss to him, but gain. There is no enjoyment in this world to be compared with the felicity of heaven. Nor can I think that Moses was discouraged: he would rather long to depart, and be with God, which is far better than staying here. But the children of Israel mourned for Aaron. And when king Arad, the Canaanite, heard that Israel came by the way of the spies, he came and fought against them, and took some of them prisoners: and Israel fought the Canaanites, and utterly destroyed them and their cities.

George. This victory will put them in spirits.

Aunt. They got possession on this side Jordan, by the infatuation of the nations, who came out to fight against them. And they journeyed from mount Hor, to compass the land of Edom: and they were much discouraged because of the way, and murmured against God and against Moses, saying, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our souls loathe this light bread. On this occasion the Lord sent fiery serpents among them: and they bit the people, and numbers died.

George. Were the serpents really fire?

Aunt. Some suppose they were thus called from their colour; but it is more probable that their bite had the effect that fire would have, and that a violent burning was brought on by it, with excruciating pain, which ended in death.

George. Did none recover that were bitten?

Aunt. Moses, by the Lord's direction, made a serpent of brass, and set it on a pole, that it might be seen throughout the camp; for all that looked at it were to be healed.

Lucy. What efficacy could a brazen serpent have to heal them, only by looking at it?

Aunt. It was the Lord's appointment, and the cure was from him: and they that believed in God found

found the efficacy of it; it likewise formed a significant type of Christ. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so (said Jesus, in his discourse to Nicodemus) must the son of man be lifted up. John iii. 14.

Maria. And when was he thus lifted up?

Aunt. When he suffered on the cross. The erecting of a brazen serpent on a pole, that had the figure, not the poison of those serpents, doth, in a lively manner, set forth the lifting up of Jesus on the cross, who was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, though perfectly free from sin himself. The looking at the brazen serpent is a fit emblem of believing in Christ crucified for salvation; for he has said, Look unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved.

Maria. Did the little children look at the serpent?

Aunt. If they were bitten, and did not, they must die; and so must you, Maria, if you do not look to Jesus.

Maria. But I have not been bitten by a serpent.

Aunt. The old serpent, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; and since he seduced our first parents, we have become an easy prey to him: for we are born in sin; and this poison of the old serpent is in your heart.

Maria. You frighten me, aunt! what can I do?

Aunt. Look unto Jesus; for he has promised to save all that put their trust in him.

Lucy. Did Moses destroy the brazen serpent?

Aunt. He did not: it was preserved by the Israelites to the time of king Hezekiah, who, being informed that the people paid a superstitious regard to it, had it broken to pieces. After this miracle, the Israelites were attacked, first, by Sihon, king of the Amorites, and then by Og king of Bashan, both of whom they defeated and slew, and took possession of their cities, with the adjacent country.

George. My sister told me, she thought we should hear about Balaam to-day.

Aunt. We must defer that till to-morrow.

DIALOGUE XII.

George. **I** Know who Balaam was: a wicked prophet who beat his ass, and made him speak.

Aunt. No, child; it was the Lord that opened the mouth of the ass, and made him speak, to reprove the madness of the prophet.

Maria. Where was Balaam going?

Aunt. To Balak, the king of Moab, who had sent for him, knowing that he dealt in divination and enchantments. And when the elders of Moab, and the elders of Midian, came unto Balaam, they said unto him, Thus saith Balak, There is a people come out of Egypt, and they cover the earth; and they abide in the plains of Moab: come thou, and curse this people, for they are too mighty for me: for I know that he whom thou blestest is blessed, and he whom thou curstest is cursed. And Balaam detained them that night. And God spake unto Balaam, saying, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse this people; for they are blessed. Upon this, he refused to go, and sent back the messengers

messengers the next morning. But this only made the king more anxious to gain him over to curse Israel. And he sent princes, more, and more honourable, promising Balaam great rewards and promotions.

Lucy. What did he say to this ?

Aunt. He told them, if Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold, he could not go beyond the word of the Lord, to do more or less ; but he invited them to tarry that night, and he would inquire of the Lord. And God came unto Balaam at night, and gave him permission to go with the men, if they came to call him ; but it does not appear that he waited for their calling ; but rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab ; for his heart longed for the rewards. And God's anger was kindled ; and the angel of the Lord stood in the way, for an adversary against him.—*Lucy,* fetch the Bible, and read the account : you will find it in Numbers xxii. 22, to the end.

George. He ought not to have beaten his poor ass ; for it was the means of saving his life.

Lucy. When he came to the king, I am astonished that he should so plainly tell him, The word that God putteth into my mouth, that will I speak.

Aunt. It clearly appears, that he was influenced by

by the power of God, and could not act according to his own will, though he tried all possible means, and foolishly fancied, that by outdoing the Israelites in the number of altars and sacrifices, the Moabites might gain the ascendancy in the favour of God, and he might obtain leave to curse and destroy Israel. It is evident from the whole history, he had heard that the Israelites had one altar, upon which they offered bullocks and rams, and were accepted in so doing.

Lucy. But God did not suffer him to curse his people.

Aunt. By the constraining power of God, he was obliged to pronounce blessings on Israel; and thus he that opened the mouth of the ass, guided the mouth of this wicked man, to speak words contrary to the desire of his heart. Read his prophecies, Numbers xxiii. and xxiv.

Lucy. Moses himself could not have more fully blessed them; but what does he mean, when he says, There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and smite the corners of Moab?

Aunt. This prophecy is supposed to extend to the coming of Christ, which was near 1500 years after, and it is thought by some, that the tradition of this star, predicted by Balaam, being disseminated through the East,

East, prepared the way for the wise men's following the star which appeared at the birth of Christ. The accomplishment of this prophecy began in David, who swayed the sceptre over Israel, and gained considerable victories over the Moabites. Balaam prophesied also the destruction of Amalek, who was the first of the nations that came out against Israel, that his latter end should be, that he should perish for ever. And of the Kenites, he said, Asher should carry them captive; and ships should come from Chittim, and afflict Asher. Chittim, in Scripture, always means the inhabitants of Europe, especially the Greeks and Romans.

George. I want the history of the Romans; will you give it us, aunt?

Aunt. Your mamma, when you are a little older, will present you with Rollin's History; there you will have an account both of the Greeks and Romans. Thus Balaam, instead of cursing the Israelites, predicts the final destruction of their implacable enemies. And Balaam returned home; the king also went his way.

Maria. Dissatisfied enough; he must be sadly vexed, that Balaam could not curse Israel.

Aunt. But Balaam suggested to him a most diabolical plan.

George. What was it?

Aunt.

Aunt. To draw the Israelites into folly and idolatry, which he knew would bring down the wrath of God upon them: for this purpose, he counselled the Moabites to invite Israel to the sacrifices of their gods.

Lucy. How could they be so wicked and foolish as to go !

Aunt. Probably they were not aware of the evil consequences of this intercourse, but only thought to gratify their curiosity, and be civil to these strangers, who so kindly invited them to their feasts.

Maria. There could not be much harm in that.

Aunt. But it produced a deal of mischief: deep snares were laid for them: and they forsook the Lord, and joined themselves to Baal-peor, the idol of the Moabites: in consequence of which the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; and a plague broke out among the people, of which no less than twenty-four thousand died. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take the heads, or ringleaders of the people, and hang them up. And Moses gave orders to the judges to slay every one that was joined to Baal-peor. And Phinehas, a young man, the grandson of Aaron, who was zealous for God with a holy indignation, entered in among the people, and slew two of the most daring sinners, who supposed themselves secure on account of their dignity.

dignity. Zimri, being a prince of Israel, and Cozbi, a daughter of a prince of Midian: they thought they might sin with impunity, and none would dare approach them; but Phinehas slew them, and thereby saved Israel.

This is an instructive lesson to young people, to beware what company they enter into, and in the choice of their acquaintance, to consult their friends and superiors, who, from their age and experience, are better acquainted with the wiles and snares of a bewitching world.

Maria. But, aunt, I would not go with any body but what appeared good; and you know they would not lead me into evil.

Aunt. Wicked people will often put on the mask of goodness, virtue, and friendship, to betray the innocent: many young persons have been thus ensnared, who, from small beginnings, have gone on to commit enormous crimes, and have been cut off in the prime of life, by the hands of justice.

Maria. Oh, aunt! can there be such wicked people? I will never leave my mamma; or else I will never go with any body but whom mamma approves.

Aunt. My dear, I hope you will always maintain that resolution, and be preserved from those snares with which the world abounds; for very few are like Phinehas, of whom God gave this testimony, that, as he had been zealous for him, and turned away his

his wrath from the children of Israel, he would settle upon him the covenant of peace, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; that is, a priesthood which should endure to the end of the Jewish dispensation, and then be succeeded by the unchangeable priesthood of Christ, which was typified by that of Aaron and his descendants. And the Lord said unto Moses, Avenge the children of Israel of Midian: afterward thou shalt die. Moses accordingly chose a thousand men out of each tribe to go to war against the Midianites, whom they totally defeated, and took possession of their country. Balaam also, who, by his counsel had made Israel to sin, was slain by the sword.

Moses, having now brought the Israelites to the borders of the land of Canaan, and knowing the time of his departure was at hand, wished to impress upon their minds, a sense of the goodness of God, and their obligations to him. For this purpose he composed, what we call, the book of Deuteronomy: the word signifies a second law, as it chiefly consists in a repetition of those laws God had enjoined upon them, with motives to obedience, enforced upon the ground of their peculiar relation to God, and the wonders he had wrought on their behalf. This book of the law was to be read publicly, at the end of every seven years, on the feast of tabernacles. Moses, having by the command of God

appointed Joshua to be his successor, called the people together to strengthen and encourage them, with the assurance that though he should be removed by death, the Lord would go before them, and destroy the nations. He then addressed Joshua, saying, Be strong and of a good courage, for thou must go with this people, and bring them into the land which the Lord will give them: the Lord is he that goeth before thee, he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed. He then gave Joshua the charge of the people, and divided the lands which they had taken from Sihon and Og, from the river Arnon to mount Hermon, which he gave to the tribes of Reuben, and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh: so their possessions lay on this side Jordan.

Lucy. Then they might sit down at their ease, and enjoy themselves.

Aunt. They obtained this grant on condition of their assisting the rest of the tribes in all their wars, till they had subdued the Canaanites, and possessed the promised land.

George. Did they fulfil their engagements?

Aunt. They did; and left their wives and children in the cities which they had taken.

Maria. Who protected the women and children?

Aunt. The God of Israel; and there was no evil
came

came near their dwellings. Moses, having finished the book of the law, delivered it to the priests, to be laid up in the ark, with orders that it should be read to the people. He afterwards pronounced a benediction upon the twelve tribes, which may be considered both as a prayer for, and a prophecy of, their future felicity, and then gave them some glorious promises in the name of God, which you will find in Deut. chap. xxxiii.

Maria. How long did Moses live after this?

Aunt. But a short time. And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgar, over against Jericho. And the Lord gave him a view of all the land of Canaan; and Moses died there, at the age of one hundred and twenty years.

Maria. I hope I shall not die alone; who buried him?

Aunt. We can never be alone if God be with us, and if you were dying, my dear, and God was not with you, what could your friends do for you in that hour? they could not save you: seek, my dear children, an interest in the love of Jesus; and then, if death come, it will not be a matter of any consequence whether you are in company or alone; you will soon be translated into an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made per-

fect. We are told that God buried Moses, and that the place of his sepulchre was not known. And the children of Israel wept for Moses thirty days. And there arose not a prophet like unto Moses, whom the Lord conversed with face to face: he was both prophet and king. In this, as well as in many other things, he was an eminent type of Jesus Christ.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XIII.

Lucy. MY dear aunt, the farther we go in the Sacred History the more anxious we are to hear : I think we could stay all day, and not be tired.

Aunt. I am happy, my dear children, to find you so willing to attend : may the Lord give you understanding hearts. We have now gone through the history of 2552 years and a half, from the beginning of the world, forty of which had been spent in the wilderness, till all that murmuring generation was consumed, except Joshua and Caleb ; and now their children, which they said should die in the wilderness, are about to enter the promised land, under the command of Joshua.

Maria. I almost tremble for them : I fear a great many of them will be killed before they subdue the Canaanites.

Aunt. I hope, my dear, your fears will subside, when you hear what the Lord said to Joshua. He spake unto him saying, Arise, and go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I have given unto them, that they may possess it,

from Lebanon to the river Euphrates: there shall not a man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life; as I was with Moses so will I be with thee: observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee; turn not from it, that thou mayest prosper: meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written; for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and shalt have good success.

George. This was spoken to Joshua, and the children of Israel.

Aunt. And to all that love the precepts of God. It is as binding upon us to meditate on the word of God both day and night, as it was on them; and therein the Lord will prosper our way. For the apostle, with the freedom of a vigorous faith, extends the promise contained in this address, to all believers: as you may perceive by looking to the beginning of the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Joshua, being now fixed as leader or general of the armies of Israel, sent out two spies secretly; and they entered Jericho, and went into Rahab the harlot's house. It is probable she kept a house of entertainment for travellers. Now the king of Jericho had intelligence, that two men of Israel were come into the city, and that they were in Rahab's house: and the king sent and commanded her to bring them forth

forth. But she, sensible of the danger to which they would be exposed, concealed them, and told the king's messengers that the men had been there, but that they left her about the time of shutting of the gates: she advised an immediate pursuit, and her advice was followed. She then returned to the strangers, whom she had hid on the roof of the house, and entered into free conversation with them, telling them, that when her people had heard the wonders the Lord had wrought for Israel, in drying up the Red Sea, and in the destruction of the Amorites, their hearts did faint, neither, said she, was there any courage remaining in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven and in earth. What a manifestation is here of Rahab's faith, and its fruits, which are so highly celebrated in the New Testament. She was afterwards married to Salmon, a prince of Judah, and so brought into the line of the Messiah.

Maria. Did she make her escape with the spies?

Aunt. No; she desired them to swear unto her by the Lord, that as she had shewed kindness unto them, so they would shew kindness unto her, and to her father and mother, and brothers and sisters, to deliver their lives from death.

Lucy. I admire her for thinking of her relations.

Aunt. Herein she has set us an excellent example;

ple; may we be enabled to follow it, to pray for them who take no thought for themselves, that the Lord would deliver their souls from death.

George. What did the men say to her request?

Aunt. They swore unto her, to deal kindly and truly with her. And she let them down by a cord, through a window; for her house was on the town-wall. And the men ordered her to fix the scarlet cord, with which she had let them down, to her window, as a mark to them, that they might know her house, and to bring all her family into it. Thus the house which had protected the spies of Israel was fixed upon as a refuge for those who were found in it, when others were utterly destroyed.

Maria. Did the men get safe to the camp of Israel?

Aunt. They did, and spoke to Joshua in the following words, Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants do faint because of us. And Joshua rose early in the morning, and took measures for the people's marching from the place of their encampment.

George. What, to Jericho?

Aunt. They had Jordan first to pass: and they lodged on the very borders of it that night, to be ready to pass over in the morning.

Lucy.

Lucy. Did they know that the waters would be divided ?

Aunt. It does not appear that they did : but they expressed no distrust about the event. At any time the passage of such a multitude of men, women, and children, with flocks and herds, and all their substance, by fords, must have been attended with difficulty and delay ; but when Jordan overflowed its banks, it must certainly have been impracticable. Joshua, therefore, to encourage their faith, said unto them, To-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you ; and he will, without fail, drive out from before you the inhabitants of the land : for behold, the ark of the covenant passeth over before you into Jordan ; and as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark shall rest in the waters of Jordan, the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above ; and they shall stand up on a heap.

George. In the same manner as the Red Sea ?

Aunt. It was somewhat different : here the channel was left dry for the space of several miles, the waters running off towards the dead sea, while those above stood like mountains very far back towards the sea of Tiberias, without overflowing the adjacent country : their passage through the Red Sea was

in

in the night, fleeing from their enemies ; but this was in the day, in full view of Jericho.

Lucy. What a noble fight it must be !

Aunt. Indeed it was ; when the priests, with the ark which was a symbol of God's presence, stood in the middle of Jordan all the day, while all the people passed over on dry ground. And Joshua ordered that twelve men, a man out of every tribe, should take each a stone, and set it up in Jordan, where the ark had stood, and that they should bring twelve stones out of Jordan. And when all the people had passed over, Joshua commanded the priests to come up out of Jordan : and it came to pass as soon as their feet had touched Canaan's land, the waters overflowed all their banks, as they did before.

And they encamped in Gilgal on the east of Jericho. The wilderness, through which the children of Israel passed, is emblematical of the world, in which we sojourn ; the river Jordan, of death, through which we must all pass ; and Canaan, of heaven. Jesus, of whom the ark was a type, has passed through Jordan, and opened a way for his people ; many of whom have gone triumphing through the Jordan of death, in the midst of their enemies, and have obtained a glorious entrance into the heavenly Canaan above.

George. You have not informed us, Aunt, what
Joshua

Joshua did with the twelve stones which they brought out of Jordan.

Aunt. Joshua erected them as a monument in Gilgal to perpetuate this glorious event.

George. Then I suppose they marched immediately to Jericho.

Aunt. They were some days before they attempted the siege. By the command of God they first attended to their religious duties: their ready compliance on this occasion, when they had just entered an enemy's country, shows their faith in God, and confirms the opinion that this generation was the best of the Israelites. We may see by them the advantages of a religious education: they were brought up under the immediate tuition of Moses, and had profited by his instructions; whereas their fathers, having lived in Egypt, had contracted many evil habits from the Egyptians.

Lucy. Did the manna fall as usual?

Aunt. They had not long entered Canaan before the manna ceased; and they ate of the corn of the land. But a pot of the manna was preserved, and laid up in the ark, as a memorial of the miraculous supplies, which God granted his people in their passage through the wilderness.

Now it came to pass one day, as Joshua was viewing the city, that he saw a man with a drawn sword in his hand;

hand; and he said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our enemies? And he said, As captain of the Lord's host am I come. Then Joshua fell to the earth and did worship.

Maria. But he ought not to have worshipped a man.

Aunt. Joshua knew it to be the Lord, who appeared to him on this occasion. If you recollect, this is not the first time in which the Son of God, the promised Messiah, put on the appearance of a man. And he gave Joshua particular instructions how to conduct the siege. Joshua accordingly prepared for it. But we cannot proceed any farther to-day.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XIV.

George. **G**OOD morning to you, aunt, I have been dreaming about the taking of Jericho; pray in what manner did they make the attack?

Aunt. The armed men marched before, and in the rear; and the priests with the ark in the centre, blowing trumpets of ram's horns; and they went round the city, with orders that none were to shout, till Joshua gave the word of command. They marched in the same order the second day, and continued to do so seven days successively: on the seventh day, they encompassed the city seven times; and the seventh time, Joshua said unto the people, Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city. And the wall of Jericho fell down flat, and made a free passage for them to enter.

Lucy. What became of Rahab; for her house stood on the town wall?

Aunt. It was by a miracle that the wall fell, and that God who loosened so large a range of buildings, that on a sudden they were levelled with the ground,

made her house stand firm as a rock. And Joshua commanded the two men, whom she had concealed, to fetch her, and all that were with her in her house. And they brought her out, and all her kindred. Then they utterly destroyed both old and young: they spared none; and they burnt the city with fire; only the silver and gold they put into the treasury of the Lord's house. Thus the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread through all the country.

Lucy. But was it not very cruel to kill and destroy every person?

Aunt. We must consider that Joshua acted by the authority of the King of kings: all the Canaanites were in open rebellion against God: they had renounced him, and worshipped other gods; yet it was in his cities they dwelt, for the whole earth is the Lord's. Now the Israelites were appointed by God himself to be the executioners of his justice on these rebel nations: and if they let them escape, the Lord assured them they should not go unpunished. Joshua next besieged Ai; but there the Israelites fled before their enemies, and thirty-six men were slain.

George. How is this?

Aunt. Because Israel had sinned. Joshua was astonished when Israel turned their backs on their enemies: and he went and poured out his complaint unto the

the Lord; and the Lord told him that Israel had stolen of the accursed thing, and that he would be no more with them, except they destroyed the accursed from amongst them.

Lucy. How was Joshua to find it out?

Aunt. By appointment from God, it was to be discovered by lot. He brought out the tribes one by one, and the tribe of Judah was taken; and Achan was found to be the man: for he had stolen a Babylonish garment, and some silver and gold, and hid them in his tent in the earth: he acted as if no eye saw him: but God noticed the whole transaction. If ever you, my dear children, are tempted to commit any evil, which you would not do in the sight of your friends, always remember that God sees you.

Lucy. I am sure, aunt, if we did that, we could never venture upon any thing we knew to be sinful: but what became of Achan?

Aunt. Joshua ordered that he and his children, his silver and gold, which he had stolen, his tent and all his substance, should be taken into the valley of Achor: and there they stoned them with stones, after which they burnt them with fire: so the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger, and encouraged Joshua with a promise, that the city of Ai, and her king, should be given unto him: and the people had permission to take of the spoil.

Maria. What a pity Achan did not wait a little longer ; then he might have had riches without stealing.

Aunt. Those who covet after riches generally fall into a snare ; what God gives us we may freely use ; but it is at our peril that we touch any thing forbidden.

George. But how did Joshua take Ai ?

Aunt. By stratagem : and they slew twelve thousand that day, and burnt the city with fire ; but the spoil they took for themselves.

George. Pray, aunt, what was the stratagem that Joshua used ?

Aunt. He chose out thirty thousand men, and placed them in ambush behind the city, while he and his army approached unto it : and when the people of Ai came out, Joshua fled before them, till he had drawn all the men from the city ; then, by a signal given to the ambush, they arose and set fire to the city. And when the men of Ai saw their city on fire, they had no power left : and Joshua turned upon them, and slew them. After this, Joshua builded an altar to the Lord God of Israel, and wrote upon the stones a copy of the law : and assembled the people, men, women, children, and strangers, that all might hear the law read, both the blessings and the curses, that they might fear the
Lord,

Lord, and serve him : though engaged in wars they did not neglect religious duties. The Gibeonites, by craft, obtained a league, and thus saved their lives ; but were condemned by Joshua to perpetual bondage.

Lucy. Who were the Gibeonites ?

Aunt. A people dwelling in Canaan, who had heard that Joshua was not to make league with the Canaanites, though he might with distant nations : therefore some of their princes put on old shoes, and took mouldy bread with them, and came to the camp of Israel.

Lucy. What end could this answer ?

Aunt. They pretended they were come from a far country to seek an alliance with Israel, and said that their shoes were new, and their bread hot, when they set out. And Joshua believed them, and did not ask counsel of the Lord ; he accordingly made a league with them, but soon found that he had been deceived.

Lucy. But as they were not the people they pretended to be, surely he might be free from his promise.

Aunt. Joshua did not think so : promises should never be made, without due consideration ; but, when once made, they ought to be performed, though it should be to our disadvantage. And the children of

Israel journeyed, and came to the cities of the Gibeonites, which were four in number. Joshua reproved them for thus beguiling him, and told them, that they should be bond-men, and hewers of wood, and drawers of water to the house of God.

George. Did the Gibeonites agree to this ?

Aunt. They did ; and Joshua returned to the camp at Gilgal. But the king of Jerusalem, hearing that the Gibeonites had made peace with Israel, feared greatly, for Gibeon was a royal city : and he sent to four neighbouring kings, saying, Come and help me, and we will smite Gibeon. Then the Gibeonites sent to Joshua, saying, Come up to us quickly and save us ; for all the kings of the Amorites are gathered together against us.

George. This is a fine opportunity for Joshua to get rid of them.

Aunt. In what connection, George, did the Gibeonites stand with the Israelites at this time ?

George. I do not know.

Aunt. As their servants ; and they were bound to protect them. Joshua immediately went out with all the men of war. God having told him that his enemies should be delivered into his hands, he went up from Gilgal in the night, and came on them suddenly, and slew them with a great slaughter, and pursued them by the way to Beth-horon : as they fled,

fled, the Lord sent great hail-stones down from heaven; and there were more that died of the hail than by the sword. Joshua, finding that the day would not be long enough for him to complete his victory, looked up to God, with a strong faith that the Lord would grant his request, and said, in the full view of his army, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still in heaven, and halted not to go down about a whole day; for the Lord fought for Israel. The five kings were taken alive, and Joshua ordered them to be hanged on five trees: and he took their cities.

Maria. Did the Israelites dwell in them?

Aunt. No; they returned to the camp at Gilgal, but were soon called out again to action. The kings with whom Joshua had waged war six years, now brought it to a termination themselves, by uniting all their forces against Israel: and when they were all met together, they were in multitude as the sand on the sea shore, with horses and chariots very many.

Maria. Was not Israel afraid to go forth against such a multitude?

Aunt. They had the Lord for their defence, who promised that on the next day he would deliver that vast multitude up to them: they went forth in faith
relying

relying on the word of God; and they overcame them all, and took their cities. Thus the Israelites, under Joshua, subdued the kings of Canaan, in all one and thirty. They also destroyed the Anakims, or giants, from the mountains; and there were none left save only in Gaza, and in Gath, and in Ashdod. Having now got the whole land into his possession,

Joshua divided it by lot among the children of Israel, according to their tribes; and they rested from war.

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George. What did they do then?

Aunt. Their first concern was to seek out a place for the tabernacle; and they set it up in Shiloh, where it continued three hundred years. The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, having settled their brethren in their possessions, returned to their own, on the other side Jordan: and Joshua blessed them before they departed.

Lucy. How rejoiced their children must be to see them after so long an absence; but perhaps some were slain: so that there were some mourning while others were rejoicing.

Aunt. We do not read of any of the Israelites being slain, except the thirty-six before Ai. Thus you see how wonderfully the Lord preserves his people, when they obey his commands. Joshua, being now far advanced in years, gathered all Israel together,

ther, and recited God's wonderful dealings with them, exhorted them to obedience, and renewed the covenant between them and God, and then died, being one hundred and ten years old. And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and of the elders that out-lived him, who had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel.

Maria. Did not they always serve the Lord?

Aunt. In the subsequent history you will find that they forsook God, and that he punished them by giving them into the hands of their enemies; but on their repentance, he sent them deliverers, who were called Judges. We will enter on their history at our next meeting.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XV.

George. **P**RAY, aunt, were their judges like ours?

Aunt. Our judges have nothing to do with war, but theirs were continually engaged in it. God raised them up to execute the sentence of death, which was denounced on the nations that had revolted against the King of Heaven, and worshipped idols. The Israelites, neglecting the command of God, to extirpate all the Canaanites, they became a snare to them, and drew them off from following the true God to serve their idols. This was a time of anarchy and confusion, for the Lord forsook them, and they became an easy prey to their enemies; and God gave them up into the hand of Cushan-rish-

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2591. athaim, king of Mesopotamia, who brought them into bondage, and they continued in subjection to him eight years. Then they

cried unto the Lord: and God had compassion on them, and sent them a deliverer, who became their judge. His name was Othniel, the son of Kenaz,

Caleb's

Caleb's younger brother. He went out to war against the king of Mesopotamia, whom he vanquished and subdued, and thus secured the enjoyment of peace to the Israelites for the space of forty years. But after the death of Othniel, they did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and were given up to their enemies. The Ammonites and the Amalekites joined with Eglon, king of Moab, who, by their assistance, overcame the Israelites, and kept them in bondage eighteen years. And they cried unto the Lord; and he raised them up another deliverer, whose name was Ehud. He was sent by the Israelites with a present to Eglon, which, when he had presented, he suddenly returned, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O King; and all those that were present withdrew. Then Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. Upon which, Eglon arose from his seat. And Ehud took his dagger and stabbed him: then, going out of the parlour, he shut the door and locked it: the king's attendants, not suspecting any thing, let Ehud pass, who escaped to Seirath. He immediately gathered Israel together on mount Ephraim, where they slew ten thousand valiant men of Moab. And they continued in peace till the death of Ehud, after which they relapsed into their old sin. And God gave them into the hands of Jabin, king of Canaan, to whom

whom they were obliged to submit twenty years, under heavy oppressions.

Maria. Then they had no judge at this time.

Aunt. There was a very pious woman, who dwelt in mount Ephraim; her name was Deborah, a prophetess: and the children of Israel came to her for judgment. And she sent for Barak, and told him that the Lord God of Israel had commanded, saying, Take ten thousand men of Israel, and go towards mount Tabor. But Barak refused to go, except Deborah would go with him, which she consented to do, telling him that the journey would not be to his honour, for the Lord would sell Sisera into the hands of a woman. And Deborah went up with him to Kedesh, where he gathered the people together, even ten thousand men. And she said unto Barak, Up, for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hands: is not the Lord gone out before thee? And Sisera came out against them with nine hundred war chariots, and a vast multitude of people.

George. I dare say Sisera thought he was sure of the victory.

Aunt. The battle is not to the strong, but to whom the Lord giveth it: for he defeated Sisera,

and

and all his host: and Barak slew them all with the sword.

George. But was not a woman to slay Sisera?

Aunt. Sisera was so hard beset, that he alighted from his chariot, and escaped on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, where, after taking some refreshment, he fell asleep: and Jael took a nail, and, with a hammer, drove it through his temples. Thus all the purposes of God will be accomplished.

Lucy. I suppose she did it, because he was an enemy to the Lord's people.

Aunt. Undoubtedly she knew him to be such. Now Barak was pursuing Sisera. And Jael came out to him, and said, I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And she brought him into her tent, where Sisera lay dead, with the nail in his temples. So God subdued on that day, Jabin king of Canaan, before the children of Israel. For a memorial of this victory, Deborah composed a beautiful song, or divine Ode; which you may read in the 5th chapter of Judges.

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Maria. Surely now they will walk in the commands of God's law.

Aunt. When their afflictions were over, they soon forgot God, and followed their evil propensities. And he gave them into the hands of the Midian-

ites, who greatly impoverished them, and destroyed their corn and cattle, so that for fear of them they hid themselves in caverns and dens. In this situation they continued seven years. Then they besought the Lord for deliverance ; and he sent a prophet to call them to repentance, before he raised up a judge, or deliverer : after which, Gideon, the
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2759. son of Joash, was chosen for that purpose ; which was made known to him by an angel.

Maria. How did the angel appear to him ?

Aunt. As he was threshing wheat by a wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. And he said unto him, The Lord be with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon answered, If the Lord be with us, why is all this befallen us ? where are all his miracles which our fathers told us of ? but now the Lord has forsaken us, and given us up to our enemies. And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel ; have not I sent thee ? From which expression we may infer, that this angel was the Son of God, who, on the present occasion, and several others, appeared in a human form, as a prelude to his becoming man in the fulness of time. And Gideon desired a sign that he might be certain of the truth of what God had said unto him.

And Gideon brought a kid, with cakes, and broth, and presented it. And the angel of God said, Lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord touched them with the staff which was in his hand; and, by fire miraculously kindled, the whole was consumed as a sacrifice, not as an entertainment; by which it appeared he was God and not man. And the Lord departed out of his sight.

Lucy. Did the Lord give Gideon any instructions how he was to proceed?

Aunt. It was revealed to him that night. God commanded him first to break down the altar of Baal, which his father had made, and to cut down the grove which shaded it: by this he declared open war against Israel's idolatry, before he attacked their enemies. Gideon was afterwards ordered to build an altar, and to offer sacrifices to the Lord; intimating that their sins could be pardoned only through that atonement which was therein typified. And he took ten of his father's servants, and did as the Lord commanded him; but, fearing his father and the men of the city, he did it in the night.

George. What did the people say in the morning?

Aunt. They concluded it was Gideon, and came

to his father, desiring him to bring out his son that he might die.

Maria. Poor Gideon !

Aunt. His father, who seems to have been the chief man in idolatry, was struck with his son's courage, and said unto the people, If Baal be God, let him plead for himself, against him who has cast down his altar.

Lucy. What effect had this on the minds of the people?

Aunt. It appears to have produced a reformation in that city ; for when the Midianites and Amalekites gathered together, and set themselves in battle array against the children of Israel, Gideon blew with a trumpet, and the people of his own city followed him : and he sent messengers to four other cities to join him. Gideon, being somewhat discouraged on viewing the vast multitude of the enemy, asked a sign of the Lord. He proposed to put a fleece of wool on the ground, and if that was wet with the dew, and the earth dry all round, then he should believe that the Lord would surely save Israel by his hand. The Lord granted his request, yet he was not satisfied : he asked the reversal of the sign, begging the Lord would not be angry with him, and obtained it. Early in the morning he marched his army, and pitched at Harod, the

the Midianites being on the north side of them, lying along the valley like grasshoppers for multitude. Gideon, out of thirty-two thousand men who came to him, by divine direction, chose only three hundred, and with them he put this vast army to flight.

Lucy. I cannot conceive how he could accomplish it with so few men.

Aunt. And this small company seems only to have retained present provisions, and each a trumpet.

George. They must appear as if they were going to play rather than to fight.

Aunt. Gideon's faith was staggered ; and God told him, if he yet feared, to take his servant with him by night to the camp of the enemy, and hear what they should say : he accordingly went down, and heard a man telling a dream to his comrade ; that a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and smote a tent, and overturned it.

Lucy. What could Gideon make of this dream ?

Aunt. The dream itself seemed to have little significance in it ; but the interpretation which the other man gave to him that told the dream, strengthened Gideon's faith. And he worshipped God, and returned to his men, and told them, that the Lord had delivered the host of Midian into his hands.

George. But you have not told us the interpretation of the dream.

Aunt. The man said unto his fellow, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.

Maria. I long to know how they were put to flight with trumpets.

Aunt. Gideon divided his men into three companies, and put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers ; thus concealing their lamps, they passed unobserved to their appointed stations ; and the men thus divided were able to compass the whole camp of the Midianites : then, in the dead of the night, when most of their enemies were fast asleep, they began all at once breaking their pitchers one against another, with as much noise as they could, at the same time blowing the trumpets and shouting, " The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

Lucy. What an alarm it must occasion ! and what confusion the Midianites must be in ! they must conclude themselves encompassed by a large army, when they saw the whole camp surrounded with lights.

Aunt. The distraction and terror they were in made them think every one they saw an enemy ;
and

and thus every man's sword was turned against his fellow. As soon as Gideon perceived the stratagem to take effect, he dispatched messengers to the neighbouring places, from whence those who had been dismissed, contrary to their inclinations, and many others, soon collected: while some occupied the fords of Jordan to prevent the escape of the Midianites, others pursued, and slew the fugitives; and they took two of their princes, Oreb and Zeeb, and slew them. Gideon, having pacified the Ephraimites, who complained that they were not called to the battle at first, passed the river Jordan, defeated the remainder of the army, and slew the two kings of the Midianites, Zebah and Zalmunna. The Israelites, after these great victories, offered to settle the kingdom on Gideon and his sons, which he refused.

George. What could be his reason for so doing?

Aunt. His love for the people in choosing them a better ruler.

George. Who could that be?

Aunt. I will tell you in his own words; he said to them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you. Gideon lived to a good old age, and then died!

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XVI.

Aunt. **G**IDEON left seventy sons, besides one, (which he had by a concubine) whose name was Abimelech. After the death of Gideon, the people of Israel forsook the Lord, and fell into idolatry, neither did they shew kindness to the family of Gideon, for they suffered Abimelech to claim that authority which his father had refused: in order to accomplish his purpose, he slew all his brethren at once, except one, whose name was Jotham, who hid himself, and so escaped.

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Maria. If ever the Israelites found him, surely they made him king.

Aunt. He once made his appearance to them from the top of mount Gerizim; (this is supposed to be when the people were assembled together on some public occasion,) he then expostulated with them for the wrong they had done his father's house, in a parable, or fable, and foretold their ruin; after which he

he fled to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

George. Pray, aunt, tell us Jotham's fable.

Aunt. Our time will not permit now ; you may read it when you return home, in the 9th chapter of judges.

Maria. How long did wicked Abimelech reign ?

Aunt. Only three years. Gaal, a Shechemite, conspired against him, which being made known to him by Zebul, the ruler of the city, he utterly destroyed Shechem, and put all the inhabitants to the sword, except those who had fled to the tower, thinking to escape his fury ; but he himself cut down a bough of a tree, and ordered each of his men to do the same ; then putting the boughs round the tower, he set them on fire, and burnt it, with about one thousand men and women. * He next went to Thebez, and encamped against it, and took it ; but the men and women fled for refuge into a strong tower in the city.

George. Where he would destroy them as he did the others.

Aunt. That was his intention ; but God stopped him in his mad career ; for, in his rage, coming too near the tower, he was mortally wounded by a piece of a millstone cast down by a woman. Thus Israel was rid of a vile murderer, usurper, and tyrant ; and
God

God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father in slaying his brethren, on his own head.

George. Did his soldiers burn the tower?

Aunt. When they saw that their leader was dead, every man departed to his own home.

Maria. Who was the next judge?

Aunt. Tola, who judged Israel twenty-three years. We have no account that he was engaged in any wars: he restored peace after the late distractions, and reformed the state of religion among the people, in doing which, he was as great a blessing, as those judges who performed more memorable exploits; for to fear God, and keep his commandments, is the only secure defence of individuals or nations. Year of the World 2794. Jair, a Gileadite succeeded Tola, and judged Israel twenty-two years.

Lucy. These were happy times! I hope they never worshipped idols again.

Aunt. The whole history of the Bible, my dear, shews us the exceeding sinfulness of man, and his proneness to depart from God. The Israelites, again forsaking the true God, fell to worshipping the gods of several nations, and were delivered up into the hands of the Philistines on the west, and the Ammonites on the east, who grievously oppressed the people for eighteen years, but most terribly towards the

the close of that period, when the Ammonites passed over to fight against them. And they were sorely distressed, and cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, our God, because we have forsaken thee, and served Baalim.

Lucy. Will God be gracious to them again, after they have so repeatedly forsaken him?

Aunt. They supplicated for mercy, and, putting away their strange gods, cast themselves upon the Lord, who granted them deliverance, by making Jephthah their captain. He was a man of valour, but before he engaged in battle, he made a rash vow, that he would sacrifice to the Lord whatever came first out of his house to meet him, which, proved to be his only and beloved daughter, who came forth to congratulate her father, on the victory which the Lord had given him.

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Lucy. Did he sacrifice her?

Aunt. It is said, he did unto her according to his vow, but there are various opinions on this point some think that he performed his vow without destroying her life. After this, Jephthah fought with the Ephraimites, and put to the sword forty-two thousand, who had behaved themselves insolently against him. He judged Israel only six years. Of the next three judges, we have little more than their names.

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2794. is the only secure defence of individuals or nations. Jair, a Gileadite succeeded Tola, and judged Israel twenty-two years.

Lucy. These were happy times! I hope they never worshipped idols again.

Aunt. The whole history of the Bible, my dear, shews us the exceeding sinfulness of man, and his proneness to depart from God. The Israelites, again forsaking the true God, fell to worshipping the gods of several nations, and were delivered up into the hands of the Philistines on the west, and the Ammonites on the east, who grievously oppressed the people for eighteen years, but most terribly towards the

the close of that period, when the Ammonites passed over to fight against them. And they were sorely distressed, and cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, our God, because we have forsaken thee, and served Baalim.

Lucy. Will God be gracious to them again, after they have so repeatedly forsaken him?

Aunt. They supplicated for mercy, and, putting away their strange gods, cast themselves upon the Lord, who granted them deliverance, by making Jephthah their captain. He was a man of valour, but before he engaged in battle, he made a rash vow, that he would sacrifice to the Lord whatever came first out of his house to meet him, which, proved to be his only and beloved daughter, who came forth to congratulate her father, on the victory which the Lord had given him.

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Lucy. Did he sacrifice her?

Aunt. It is said, he did unto her according to his vow, but there are various opinions on this point some think that he performed his vow without destroying her life. After this, Jephthah fought with the Ephraimites, and put to the sword forty-two thousand, who had behaved themselves insolently against him. He judged Israel only six years. Of the next three judges, we have little more than their names.

names. Ibzan judged Israel seven years, Elon ten years, and Abdon eight years.

George. Pray, aunt, was not Samson one of their judges? he was the strongest man that ever lived. I long to hear about him.

Aunt. Then, my dear, you may be immediately gratified; for he is the next in succession. The children of Israel having again transgressed, were given up for forty years to be harassed by the Philistines, during which period Samson destroyed many, though he did not totally subdue them: but as he was a remarkable character, we will begin with his birth. An angel appeared unto Manoah's wife, promising her a son, and giving her directions concerning the child: her husband requested and obtained another visit. The angel appearing unto the woman as she sat in the field, she went, and called her husband, who conversed with the man of God, for he knew not that it was an angel, and enquired of him his name, that when his saying came to pass, they might do him honour. The angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret, or wonderful? Then Manoah took a kid, with a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord, and when the flame went up towards heaven from off the altar, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame; and Manoah and
his

his wife looked on: and they fell on their faces to the ground.

Lucy. How surpris'd they must be?

Aunt. So much so, that Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God: but his wife encouraged him not to fear, saying, If the Lord had intended to kill us, he would not have shew'd us these things. And the woman had a son at the time appointed, and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the Lord blessed ^{Year of the World} him. Observe, my dears, that the eyes of ²⁸⁴⁹ the Lord are upon children, and it is only by his blessing, that they can be happy.

George. What was the first thing in which Samson shew'd his strength?

Aunt. In killing a young lion which came roaring against him.

George. Did he knock him down with a stick?

Aunt. He had nothing in his hand; but the Lord was with him, and endued him with strength from on high, so that he rent him as he would have rent a kid: but after this, he had a more surpris'ing deliverance, for he was given up by his own countrymen into the hands of the Philistines, bound with new cords: and when the Philistines saw him in this situation, they shouted; but their shouting was of very short continuance, for the Lord was his strength, and

he brake the cords, as if they had been flax; then, seeing a jaw-bone of an afs, he took it, and flew a thousand men therewith.

Maria. What did they stand still to be knocked on the head? he could kill but one at a time.

Aunt. They were certainly intimidated, being alike unable to resist or escape. You see, my dears, by this instance, what men are when forsaken of God; their boasted courage will fail them in a moment. And Samson said, With the jaw-bone of an afs, have I slain heaps upon heaps. Thus the bone of a contemptible afs became a more formidable weapon than sword or spear. After this victory Samson was faint and ready to perish for thirst. In his distress he cried unto the Lord. And God clave a hollow place in the jaw, and water came thereout; and he drank, and his strength returned. And he went to Gaza, one of the cities of the Philistines. The men of the city, being informed of it, surrounded the house where he was, and set a watch at the gates of the city. Samson lay till midnight, when he arose, and, in contempt of the guards, took up the gates, posts, bar and all, and carried them several miles up to the top of a hill, none daring to interrupt, or seize him.

Lucy. Why did he not go, and dwell with his own people?

Aunt.

Aunt. If he had done so, he would have escaped the dreadful snare he afterwards fell into.

Lucy. What was that?

Aunt. Most likely he confided too much in his own strength, therefore the Lord left him to betray great weakness of mind; for he gave his affections to a wicked woman, whose name was Delilah. The lords of the Philistines, being informed of it, went to the woman, and offered her a large reward, if she could persuade Samson to inform her where his great strength lay. She accordingly made use of every artifice for this purpose. Samson had incontestible proofs that she meant to deliver him up, yet he was so infatuated, after having given her a number of evasive answers, as to tell her at last, that if his hair was shaven, his strength would leave him, and he should be like other men.

Lucy. I thought, aunt, that he derived all his strength from God?

Aunt. Undoubtedly he did: but it was to be continued to him by the preservation of his hair; and this was a test of his obedience to God, who engaged to be his strength, while he never suffered a razor to come on his head. When Delilah found she had got the secret, she sent to the lords of the Philistines, who came down, and gave her the money which they had promised. She then contrived to get Samson asleep;

and, having cut off his hair, awoke him with, "Samson, the Philistines are upon thee." And he rose up to go out as at other times, but he knew not that the Lord was departed from him. He now became an easy prey to his enemies; who took him, and put out both his eyes, and bound him in chains, and made him work hard in the prison-house.

Lucy. How mortifying this must be to poor Samson!

Aunt. Yet how mercifully did God deal with him, in not suffering his enemies to put him to death. His sins had brought all this evil upon him, and his punishment brought him to repentance. His hair grew again; and, as an indication that the Lord was returning to him, he recovered his strength also.

George. But of what use would that be to him, when he had lost his eyes, and was shut up in a dungeon?

Aunt. The Philistines soon felt the effects of it. They had ordered a day of rejoicing to triumph over Samson; and they brought him out of the prison to make sport of him: but how was Samson's soul grieved, when he heard them shouting praises to their god Dagon, saying, Our god hath delivered into our hands, our enemy, and the destroyer of our country; thus celebrating the triumph of Dagon their God, over the God of Israel. Upon this, Samson prayed unto the Lord
to

to strengthen him, that he might once more crush the enemies of God, and his people; being willing to lose his own life for the honour of God, and the welfare of Israel. And he desired a lad to lead him to the pillars by which the house was supported; the main weight of the building resting upon two pillars in the centre. Now the house was full of men and women, to the amount of some thousands; and all the lords of the Philistines were there. And Samson took hold of the pillars, and bowed himself with all his might: and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead Year of the World 2887. which he slew at his death were more than those which he slew in his life. Thus Samson died in bonds, in the midst of his enemies: an awful rebuke for his sins. By this blow, the princes of the Philistines were destroyed, and their government unhinged.

George. How many more judges had Israel, before they had kings to reign over them?

Aunt. Only two. The first was Eli the high priest, who judged Israel forty years. Samuel succeeded him, in whom the government by judges terminated, and the regal government was introduced. But before we proceed any farther it will be necessary to take some notice of Ruth. When we meet again we will enter on her history.

DIALOGUE XVII.

Maria. WAS Ruth a princess of Israel?

Aunt. She was a Moabitefs, and a worshipper of idols; but, by the mercy of God, she was brought to leave her people, and her country, and to choose the Lord for her God. During the time that the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land; and there was an Israelite who went to sojourn in the land of Moab, whose name was Elimelech. He appears to have been a man of affluence, which, in this case, proved a snare to him, as he could with greater ease remove himself and family, to live in plenty in Moab, intending no doubt to return, when the famine was over; but in this he shewed his love to the meat which perisheth, more than to that which endureth to eternal life; thus forsaking the ordinances and people of God.

Maria. Did he ever return to Canaan?

Aunt. It never answers to run away from God under afflictions; those of his relations who stayed in Canaan, and submitted themselves under the mighty hand of God, were exalted in due time, whilst Elimelech died at the place whither he had fled to escape death,

death, and left Naomi his wife, and his two sons in a strange land. Her sons took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. Elimelech might have foreseen the consequences of bringing them away from the people of God. Thus they settled in the land of Moab, and spent their lives among idolaters, estranged from the worship of God, Naomi's attachment to her sons made her continue with them. After she had resided there ten years, her two sons died also.

Maria. What a severe stroke this must be to lose them both!

Aunt. And what heightened the calamity, the estate which belonged to her late husband went to the next heir, there being now none of the family of Elimelech to lay claim to it. Thus was she reduced to a state of poverty, and deprived of the means of subsistence; notwithstanding which, she resolved to return to her own country. She had a real affection for her daughters-in-law, and it appears that they had a great esteem for her, and purposed to accompany her. They accordingly set out on their journey together. But Naomi, having no means of providing for herself, and no prospect for the future maintenance of her daughters, advised them to return to their own friends. Upon this, Orpah, not being willing to live in a state of poverty,

verty, took an affectionate leave of her mother-in-law, and returned back to her own land.

Maria. I hope Ruth did not leave poor Naomi.

Aunt. When Naomi saw that Ruth tarried, she said unto her, Thy sister-in-law is gone back to her friends, and her gods ; return thou also : but Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee ; for whither thou goest, I will go ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God ; and nothing but death shall part thee and me. This was a noble resolve ! she had been witness to the supports which God had given Naomi under all her losses and trials, and, like Moses, she preferred affliction with the people of God to the pleasures of the world, which are but for a season.

Lucy. Naomi's relations will almost have forgotten her after ten years absence.

Aunt. When she came to Bethlehem, the people of the city came about her, and said, Is this Naomi ? And she said, Call me not Naomi, (which signifies pleasant) but Marah ; (which signifies bitter) for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me ; I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home empty. When Naomi and Ruth were settled in some homely habitation, Ruth proposed to go a gleaning, as it was now the beginning of barley-harvest ; to which Naomi consented. And she went out, not knowing whither she went ; but the eye of the Lord was upon her, and directed

directed all her steps. And she came to the field of Boaz, who was a rich man, and gleaned after his reapers. And Boaz, entering the field, said unto his reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered, The Lord bless thee.

Lucy. How affectionately they speak to each other !

Aunt. They are a pattern for masters and servants. Boaz, seeing a stranger in the field, enquired of his servants who she was ; and, having obtained information, he thus addressed her, It hath been fully shewed me, all the kindness with which thou hast treated thy mother-in-law, since the death of thine husband, and how thou hast left thy father and mother, and the land of thy nativity, and hast come unto a people which thou knewest not : a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my Lord, for thou hast comforted me. And he said, Go not to glean in another field, but abide with my maidens ; and at meal times come thou hither, and eat with them.

Lucy. What a charming man ! what did Naomi say to all this ?

Aunt. When Ruth returned, and related to her mother the events of the day, Naomi said, Blessed be Boaz of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness

ness to the living and to the dead : the man is of near kin to us, one of our next kinsmen.

Lucy. Had she any expectations from that ?

Aunt. It was a custom among the Jews for the next of kin to marry the wife of the deceased.—Naomi instructed Ruth how to claim Boaz for her husband ; and he might lawfully take her for his wife, as she had renounced her false gods, and chose the Lord to be her God.

Maria. Were they ever married ?

Aunt. They were ; and Naomi's mourning was turned into joy. Ruth had a son whom Naomi nursed, and her neighbours called his name Obed.

George. What was their reason for naming him Obed ?

Aunt. The word signifies servant, or serviceable ; either alluding to the low estate of his mother, when gleaned in the fields, which now belonged to her ; or to the expected usefulness of her son to his family, and to Israel ; for Obed was the grandfather of king David, and from him Christ descended. Thus peculiar blessings and honours fell to the lot of Boaz, who had not disdained the low estate of Ruth, but had paid due respect to his deceased relations, and their decayed family : and Ruth experienced what our blessed Lord has said, Mark x. 29, 30 ; They that forsake father or mother,

ther, or house, or lands, for my sake, shall receive a hundred fold in this time, and in the world to come eternal life.

George. Now, sisters, we shall hear about David slaying Goliath, the giant.

Aunt. Not quite so much haste, George: many things occurred in Israel before that event took place.

Maria. We have not yet had the history of the two judges which you mentioned, Eli and Samuel.

Aunt. I will now give you an account of them. At the time Eli the high priest judged Israel, there was one Elkanah, who had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: now Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. And every year when she went up to the house of the Lord, she wept, and did not eat. In her distress she poured out her heart in fervent prayer, and asked a son of the Lord, who at length granted her request; and she named him Samuel, which signifies, asked of God. The song of praise which she offered to the Lord on this occasion is recorded in the 2d chapter of the 1st-book of Samuel. I would have you read it at your leisure.

This name, as often as it was repeated, would remind her of the Lord's goodness in answering her prayers. And she went not up to Shiloh till she had weaned

weaned her son: she then took him up with her, and brought him into the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And she said unto Eli, For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition; therefore have I lent him to the Lord as long as he liveth. I have brought him that he may abide before the Lord for ever. The Jewish writers say, that Samuel was then only three years old; but he was not too young to attend the worship of God. At this early age his mother left him to minister before the Lord. And Eli blessed Elkanah, and his wife; and prayed the Lord to grant them more children, in the room of this child whom they had dedicated to his service.

Maria. Had they any more children?

Aunt. They had three sons and two daughters.

Maria. Did Samuel ever see his mother any more?

Aunt. She came up yearly to worship the Lord at Shiloh. And the child Samuel grew, and was in favour with God, and also with men. Here is an example for you, children;—you cannot plead you are too young: you see the Lord will accept of very little children; he has declared that he loves such; for he has said, I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me; and you have had repeated instances in the history which we have gone through, that the Lord always fulfils his promises: let me intreat you then, my dears, to seek

seek him while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near. You may plead with the Lord, that, as he taught young Samuel and accepted of his service, he would also teach you to love and serve him in the days of your childhood; then you will grow in favour both with God and man. It is with this view that your dear mamma instructs, admonishes, and corrects you: the latter, perhaps, you could wish omitted; but, I assure you, this is as necessary as medicine to the sick; as one removes the indispositions of the body, so does the other those of the mind. But if our affections sway us to act contrary to our duty in this particular, we must answer for the consequences. An instance of which, I am going to relate in the conduct of Eli, who was both high priest and judge of Israel, and was bound by his office to repress vice and wickedness, and to maintain the worship of God in its purity; but his being too indulgent a father proved the ruin of himself and family.

George. How was that?

Aunt. His sons, not being restrained when they were children, grew up very wicked, and committed all manner of sin. And God sent a prophet to Eli, denouncing heavy judgments against him and his family: he was deemed accessory to the crimes of his

sons because he suffered them to pass with impunity.

Lucy. Was Eli himself a good man?

Aunt. There is no doubt of that; but God will punish his own people when they disobey him.

George. But what became of Samuel?

Aunt. He ministered unto the Lord before Eli. One night the Lord called Samuel by name; and, supposing it was Eli, he went unto him: and Eli said, I called not, lie down again. The Lord called a second time; and Samuel went to Eli, saying, But thou didst call me. Eli replied, I called thee not, my son; lie down again. The Lord called a third time, and he went again unto Eli. Then Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child; and he said unto him, Go, lie down, and if he call thee again, say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth: and Samuel did so. And the Lord said unto Samuel, I will do a thing in Israel, at which the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle: in that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken; for I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. This is a standing reproof for
all

all parents who restrain not their children; God will judge them. This message was probably sent to Eli some years before his death. Tradition reports, that Samuel at this time was only twelve years of age.

George. Did Samuel go directly and tell Eli?

Aunt. Samuel is a model of prudence. He lay till morning, and then attended to his business; opening the doors of the house of the Lord, into which the people came to worship: he was not so elated as to go and tell every one, that he had been favoured with a revelation from the Lord: his respect and affection for Eli were so great, that he was reluctant to inform him of the distressing message. Then Eli called Samuel, and adjured him to declare all that the Lord had said unto him: upon which he told him all, and hid nothing from him. And Eli said, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. Now Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him; and all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. After this, Israel went out to battle against the Philistines; and Israel was smitten before the Philistines. And when the people were come into the camp, the elders said, Let us fetch the ark of the covenant out of Shiloh, that when it cometh among

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us, it may save us out of the hands of our enemies.

Lucy. Was not that a good thought?

Aunt. By no means; it cannot admit of a doubt but they acted very wickedly: they even made an idol of the ark, saying, It shall save us; and, without consulting the Lord, vainly imagined, if the ark was with them, that the Lord would be induced to fight for them; but the Lord proved, by the event, that he could employ other methods of preserving the ark and displaying his own glory; for the result was; the ark was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni, and Phinehas were slain, with thirty thousand of Israel.

George. What news for poor Eli!

Aunt. He sat watching by the way-side, trembling for the ark of God. Though Eli had been sinfully indulgent to his sons, and, from the judgments denounced against them, had every reason to expect their death and Israel's defeat, his chief anxiety was about the ark of God: he could hear of the defeat of Israel, and of the death of his sons, with apparent fortitude; but when he found the ark was taken, he fell down in a swoon; and his neck brake, and he died.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XVIII.

Aunt. **Y**OU are very early, my dear children ;
but I will begin directly, that I may dismiss you the sooner, as I would have you get a walk this fine morning.

We left the Israelites fleeing from the Philistines, and the ark taken. They did not attempt to destroy it, but brought it to Ashdod, and set it in the temple of their god Dagon. In the morning, they found Dagon fallen down before the ark of the Lord : and they took him up, and set him in his place, attributing his fall to accident. The next morning they found Dagon with his face upon the ground before the ark of the Lord, and his head and hands broken off. By this they might have seen their stupidity in worshipping an idol that could not save itself.

Maria. Did they continue to worship the stump ?

Aunt. They revered as sacred the very threshold on which their idol had been disgraced and broken, and thus perpetuated the memory of God's triumph,

by their own superstition. They either worshipped the old stump, or got a new image made. But the Lord afflicted the men of Ashdod with diseases. And they gathered all the Lords of the Philistines unto them, saying, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel, for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our God? And they sent it to Gath: and the Lord smote that city with a very great destruction. Upon this, they removed it to Ekron: and the people of Ekron cried, They have brought the ark of the God of Israel to slay and destroy us: for there was a great destruction throughout the city: and they intreated the Lords of the Philistines to send away the ark of the God of Israel to its own place. Thus God vindicated his own glory, and made the captivity of the ark the occasion of exposing idolatry to contempt.]

Lucy. How long was the ark with the Philistines?

Aunt. Seven months. Then they sent it away, putting it on a new cart: and they took two milk-kine or cows, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. And the priests and diviners said, If it goeth up to Beth-shemesh, then the God of Israel hath done us this great evil; but, if not, then we shall know that it was not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us.

And

And the kine went the straight way to Beth-shemesh, and turned not aside; and the Lords of the Philistines followed them. And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood there. The men of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest in the valley; and they lift up their eyes and saw the ark; and they rejoiced to see it.

George. Was it not astonishing that the creatures should go to the right place of their own accord.

Aunt. It was certainly miraculous that two cows which had never been yoked, and whose calves were left at home, should draw quietly, and keep the road for several miles without a driver, never offering to return, but going to the very place which the Philistines had mentioned. The presumption of the Philistines, in requiring this additional proof of God's power was very great; but it was over-ruled for his glory, and their deeper condemnation in persisting in their idolatry. The triumph of the ark was completed when it was thus miraculously restored. And the men of Kirjath-jearim fetched up the ark of the Lord, and put it in the house of Abinadab, where it remained twenty years.

Lucy. Shall we hear any more of Samuel?

Aunt. I was just going to give you an account of

of his gathering all Israel together ; exhorting them to put away their strange gods from among them, and to serve the Lord only ; for then the Lord would deliver them out of the hands of the Philistines. And they put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only. And the Philistines came up against them : and the children of Israel were afraid, and said un-

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to Samuel, Cease not to pray unto the Lord for us, that he will save us out of the hands of the Philistines. And Samuel prayed, and the Lord heard him. On that day the Lord thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines, and they were smitten : and Israel pursued them, and smote them, and subdued them, so that they came no more into the coast of Israel all the days of Samuel. And Samuel went yearly from city to city, judging Israel ; and when he was old he made his sons judges. As we do not find that either God or the people censured Samuel on this account, we may infer, that he had properly educated his sons, and that they appeared qualified for this office ; but they, through love of money, became unjust judges.

George. What did the people do on this occasion ?

Ans. They came in a body to Samuel, and said unto him, Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy

thy ways : now, therefore, make us a king to rule over us like all the nations. This request displeased Samuel.

Maria. Why should he dislike it ?

Aunt. Because he was grieved to see their impatience and discontent with that mode of government which God himself had appointed, and under which they had received such great advantages : he felt also their ingratitude to himself ; but, instead of venting his displeasure in reproaches, he went and sought wisdom of the Lord, to know what answer to give them. And the Lord said unto Samuel, They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them : yet hearken unto their voice, and make them a king.

Lucy. Did they, upon this, name the person who should be king ?

Aunt. The history of the world cannot produce another instance, in which a public determination was formed to appoint a king, and yet no person either proposed himself, or some other to be king : it is wonderful that the tribe of Judah did not now claim the kingdom, in virtue of Jacob's blessing ; but it was of the Lord, that he might first give them such a king as they had set their hearts upon, before he raised up for them a king after his own heart.

Maria

Maria. That was David: for he was the man after God's own heart.

Aunt. By divine direction, Samuel privately anointed Saul, and afterwards called the people together to choose a king. The determination was probably by lot; for they came up by their tribes; and the tribe of Benjamin came by their families; and Saul the son of Kish was taken. And Samuel said, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen! there is none like him among all the people. And they shouted, "God save the king."

George. Why did Samuel say, There was none like him?

Aunt. From his appearance: for he was a handsome man, and taller than any of the people, from his shoulders and upwards. It appears that some of the people were dissatisfied, and despised him, and brought him no presents; but Saul held his peace. Finding himself neglected by most of the Israelites, it seems he returned home to his former occupations.

George. Here is a king and no king.

Aunt. In following his herds after he was appointed to the kingdom by the Lord himself, he looks as great as the celebrated Roman dictator from the plough; and when called forth to action, his vigour and success were not inferior to those of that renowned Roman.

George.

George. Pray, aunt, tell us what he did.

Aunt. Shortly after, Jabesh-gilead was besieged by Nahash the Ammonite, being situated on the borders of that country: the men of Jabesh were willing to submit to him on his making a covenant or treaty with them. Nahash answered, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon Israel.

Lucy. What did the men of Jabesh-gilead say to this?

Aunt. They asked seven days respite, that they might send to all the coasts of Israel: and then, if a man could not be found to deliver them, they would come out.

George. Did the Ammonites accede to this proposal?

Aunt. They did; confidently supposing that an army could not be raised in so short a time, and consequently that the nation would be the more disgraced. The men of Jabesh-gilead immediately sent messengers to Gibeah, and told the tidings to the people; and all the people wept. And Saul came after the herd out of the field; and he said, What aileth the people? and they told him: upon which, fired with a generous indignation at the insult offered to Israel, he summoned the people: and, through the influence

influence of God upon their hearts, a vast multitude assembled; upon which Saul undertook, and performed a march, perhaps of fifty miles, within the space of twenty-four hours; and by this dispatch arrived in time to rescue his brethren; for they came into the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day; and they were scattered, so that not two of them were left together.

George. Surely they will now acknowledge Saul for their king.

Aunt. Saul's success went farther with the people, than either the Lord's appointment of him, or his personal accomplishments; nay, they even wanted those to be put to death who had said, Saul shall not reign over us: but Saul would not suffer a man to be put to death, saying, The Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel this day.

Maria. Then Israel had Saul for their king, and Samuel for their judge.

Aunt. Samuel no longer esteemed himself their chief magistrate, but promised still to devote the remnant of his days to their service, as their religious instructor, and by determining their disputes in a subordinate station; in which sense he judged Israel all his days. Then Samuel called the people together to Gilgal, and there renewed the kingdom to Saul;
and

and Israel rejoiced. After Saul had reigned two years, he chose him three thousand men; one thousand of which he appointed to be with his son Jonathan.

Lucy. For what purpose did he keep these men?

Aunt. For his guard, and the support of his authority. Soon after this, Jonathan, probably by Saul's command, and, as some imagine, contrary to treaty, destroyed a garrison of the Philistines, which so exasperated them, that, to revenge the outrage, they gathered together a large army consisting of chariots, horsemen, and people, as the sand on the sea-shore in multitude.

George. But Israel had now a king to head their army, who, no doubt, would do great things.

Aunt. God left Israel on this occasion to see what their king could do for them: and, if God leave a man to his own strength it is perfect weakness. Whatever is good in man is from God; for the evil propensity of his heart will ever lead him into vanity and folly, as we shall soon see in the character of Saul. In this emergency, he endeavoured to collect the people together; but they were seized with such a panic, that instead of coming to their king, they hid themselves in caves, in pits, and in rocks: and the people that were with him deserted him, so that when he numbered them, he had

but six hundred men. Now Samuel had appointed to meet Saul; but not coming so soon as he expected, Saul himself offered sacrifices. When he had finished, Samuel came, who rebuked him, saying, Thou hast done foolishly; for thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God; therefore the Lord hath rejected thee, and thy kingdom shall not continue.

The Lord intended by these things to chastise the people for their sins, to expose their folly in expecting that a king could save them, and to prepare the way for a glorious deliverance, which he intended to effect for them.

Lucy. By whom?

Aunt. By Jonathan the son of Saul, who said unto his armour-bearer, Come, and let us go over to the garrison of the Philistines; it may be that the Lord will work for us; for there is no restraint with him to save by many or by few. It appears to have been early in the morning when Jonathan and his armour-bearer placed themselves in view of the Philistines, who, in contempt, challenged them to come up. Jonathan, being persuaded that the Lord would appear for them, encouraged his armour-bearer to follow him, and, without hesitation, climbed up the rock into the enemy's camp.

George.

George. But this was rushing into destruction. If I had been the Philistines, I would have destroyed them as they were climbing, for then they could not have defended themselves.

Aunt. The Philistines thought themselves secure of their prey; they despised two feeble men, and intended to make them the scorn and derision of the whole army. But Jonathan had no sooner got to the top of the rock, than he began to fight valiantly, and his armour-bearer after him; so that they slew twenty men, without their attempting either to fight or flee: God was on their side, and helped them, and caused a great trembling in the camp, and the earth quaked. The Philistines now supposed the Israelites to have been in the midst of the camp, and, in their confusion, began slaying one another. This being perceived by the centinels of Saul's army, Saul and the people came to the battle; and they smote the Philistines. And Saul charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food to-day. Now the people were faint; and they came into a wood where there was honey; and Jonathan did eat of it, and was refreshed. And the people told him of his father's oath; and he said, My father hath troubled the land; if all the people had freely eaten to-day, there might have been a much greater slaughter

of the enemy. Saul proposed to pursue the Philistines by night, and said, Let us not leave one of them; but the priest said, Let us inquire of the Lord; to which Saul consented: but God answered him not; then Saul justly concluded that God was offended; and he determined to find out the offender by casting lots; and said, As the Lord liveth, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.

Maria. Surely God was not angry with Jonathan for eating a little honey.

Aunt. Jonathan had unknowingly exposed himself to his father's curse; the lot was cast, and Jonathan taken: and Saul said to his son, What hast thou done? Jonathan replied, I did but taste a little honey, and lo, I must die! And Saul answered, Thou shalt surely die.

Lucy. What an unnatural father! how unfeelingly he condemns his son, when he himself had brought him into the snare: one should have thought he would have been overwhelmed with grief: but what did the people say to this?

Aunt. They interposed, and said, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground. So the people rescued Jonathan.

Maria. I can hardly express how pleased I am that Jonathan escaped; but I have taken such a dislike

like to Saul, that I hardly wish to hear any more about him.

Lucy. Then, Maria, you would hear no more of Jonathan.

Maria. Lucy, you must be mistaken; for Jonathan surely would succeed his father.

Aunt. Jonathan died at the same time with his father.

George. Pray, aunt, let us hear the whole account. It is very wrong in Maria to interrupt.

Maria. I ask pardon, and join in intreating my aunt to proceed.

Aunt. I will, with pleasure, gratify you at our next meeting.

DIALOGUE XIX.

Aunt. **A**CCORDING to promise, we will proceed in the history of Saul. The Lord expressly commanded him, by his prophet Samuel, to go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy that nation. Saul accordingly smote the Amalekites, but saved their king, Agag, alive; and spared the best of the flocks, and all that was good of the spoil. And Samuel came to meet Saul in the morning; and the king said, Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord.

Lucy. How durst he say so, when he had spared what God had bidden him to destroy?

Aunt. And he had the farther audacity to pretend they were spared for sacrifices. And Samuel said, Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry: because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. I must, my dear children, again and again remind you, that the scripture history is written for our instruction. You will

will find many people like Saul putting God off with a partial obedience ; and like him they will at last be rejected ; for there is no one can deceive God : always act, therefore, as if God was present with you ; for though you see him not, his eye is upon you : it is delightful to walk in the path of God's commands ; for his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace.

George. But what became of king Agag ?

Aunt. Samuel ordered Saul to bring him forth : and Samuel hewed him in pieces ; first reminding him of the murders and cruelties he had committed, that as he had meted to others it should be meted to him again. After this Samuel came no more to Saul, but mourned for him in secret. And the Lord said unto Samuel, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite ; for I have provided me a king among his sons. Then Samuel went to Bethlehem, and sent for Jesse and his sons. When they were come before him, Samuel looked on Eliab, and said within himself, Surely this is the Lord's anointed : but he was mistaken ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. And seven of the sons of Jesse passed before Samuel ; but he said, The Lord hath not chosen these. And he said to Jesse, Are here all thy children ? He answered, The youngest is with the sheep. And Samuel said, send and fetch him ;

him; for we will not sit down till he come hither.

Year of
the World
2941. And David came. He was ruddy and of
a beautiful countenance; and the Lord
said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he. And
Samuel anointed him in the midst of his brethren.

George. David had nearly lost his chance by being out of the way.

Aunt. This was not by accident, but more fully to shew that God seeth not as man seeth. David was chiefly remarkable for his strong faith, piety, and contemplative disposition; and being not above eighteen or twenty years of age, his father thought it of no importance to keep him at home on this occasion: besides which, it is probable his brothers had already displayed their valour in the field: but he was not flighted by his heavenly Father; and none will ever find they are out of the way, while they are in the path of duty. David's name signifies Beloved; and he was an eminent type of the Beloved Son of God. He continued with his father, as before, attending to the flocks; waiting the Lord's time for being called to action.

George. But when did he kill Goliath?

Aunt. In a short time after this, the armies of the Philistines came out against Israel: and the two armies were set in array; the Philistines on a mountain on one side, and Israel on a mountain on the other

other side, with a valley between them. And there went out a champion, whose name was Goliath. He was a giant of the race of the Anakims; he was ten feet high on the most moderate computation; and he had a helmet of brass, with a coat of mail, and a spear, whose head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and he defied the armies of Israel day after day, challenging them to appoint a man, with whom he might engage in single combat.

George. Where are Jonathan and his armour-bearer who before fought so valiantly?

Aunt. The victory that Jonathan obtained on that occasion is not to be attributed merely to his personal bravery; but rather to the peculiar presence and favour of God, who inspired him with courage, and crowned him with success: but he had not the same inward intimation to engage in this service: it appears that all the Israelites were dismayed, and not one dared to come forth; though the king had promised to him that should kill Goliath, that he would bestow on him great riches, and give him his daughter to wife; and that he would make his father's house free in Israel.

Maria. But where is David?

Aunt. Still with his sheep: his father had sent his three eldest sons to the army.

George. But it was David that killed Goliath: did he leave his sheep, and go to the army without his father's knowledge?

Aunt.

Aunt. David is a pattern of obedience; for though he knew he was to be king of Israel, yet he stirred not from the business assigned him, till his father called him to go to the army, to take some provisions to his brethren, and a present to their captain. And he went early in the morning, leaving his sheep with a keeper: and he came to the army, and saluted his brethren. And Goliath came forth, and defied Israel: and David heard him; and he said, Who is this Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God? And the people told David the offers which the king had made to him who should kill Goliath: and Saul was told the words which David had said; and he sent for him. And David said unto the king, Let no man's heart fail; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. And Saul said, Thou art but a youth, and how canst thou fight with this Philistine? Saul seemed unwilling to let him go, unless he could relate some instance of his courage: which he did, with the most beautiful simplicity, saying unto Saul, A lion and a bear entered among my father's flock, and took away a lamb; and I pursued him, and took the lamb out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard and slew him: thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God: the Lord that delivered me
from

from the lion and from the bear will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.

George. How did David go armed?

Aunt. Saul armed him with a coat of mail, and put on him a helmet of brass, and a sword by his side; but he found himself encumbered by these: he therefore put them off; and took his staff, and his shepherd's bag with some stones, and his sling in his hand; and he drew near to the Philistine.

Lucy. The Philistine could hardly suppose David was come forth thus accoutred against him.

Aunt. But when he found it was so, he treated David with contempt and disdain, and cursed him by his gods: and he said, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

Maria. How he boasts! but I think it did not intimidate David.

Aunt. David's speech is full of faith. He said, Thou comest to me with sword, and with spear, and with shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied: this day will the Lord deliver thee into my hands, and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel: and all this people shall know, that the
Lord

Lord saveth not by spear or sword; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands. Noble youth! may you be enabled my dear children, in every time of trial to put your trust in the Lord alone, and then, like David, you need not fear to face any danger.

George. Which began the engagement?

Aunt. The Philistine advanced in proud contempt. Then David took a stone from his bag, and flung it, and smote the Philistine: the stone sunk in his forehead, and he fell, So David prevailed with a sling and a stone, for there was no sword in his hand.

George. Then how did David cut off his head?

Aunt. David took Goliath's own sword, and cut off his head therewith.

Lucy. How astonished the Philistines must be!

Aunt. When they saw their champion dead, they had not courage to stand their ground, but fled; upon which Israel pursued them, and gained a complete victory. And David was brought unto the king, who retained him in his service. Jonathan had been a witness of David's faith and piety, and he loved him: as a testimony of his affection, he stripped himself of his robe, and gave it to David; thus equipping him according to his character and station, as a courtier and soldier. And David attended Saul whithersoever he went; and the people loved him.

As the king returned through the several cities of Israel, the women, according to the custom of the times, met him with music and singing, answering one another as they played, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

Maria. Was Saul offended at their giving more honour to David than to himself?

Aunt. From this time he was jealous of him. As Saul sunk in popularity, David rose. Saul, perceiving it, concluded God was about to rend the kingdom from him. At one time he would have killed David by casting a javelin or dagger at him, but David avoided it. Saul after this, under pretence of advancing David, removed him from his presence, and made him captain over a thousand; which served to ingratiate him the more with the people, by affording him the opportunity of leading them forth to victory over their enemies.

Lucy. When did Saul perform his promise of giving him his daughter to wife?

Aunt. He delayed it from time to time: at length, his malice prompted him to renew the offer, that he might excite David to venture his life more freely, in order to be accounted worthy of such an honour; but at the time when she should have been given to David, she was given to another; yet David expressed no resentment.

Sentment. Afterwards Saul gave him Michal his younger daughter.

Maria. Surely the king will love him now he is his son-in-law.

Aunt. It was but a very little time after this, that Saul spake to Jonathan and all his servants to kill David.

George. I am sure Jonathan would not do it.

Aunt. He told David of his father's design, that he might provide for his safety; but promised to plead for him with his father.

Maria. Did he succeed?

Aunt. For that time he did. Saul promised he should not be slain, and David appeared at court as usual. After this, he went again to fight the Philistines, and returned victorious, which revived Saul's envy: so that a second time he cast a javelin at him; but David avoided it, and fled to his house. Michal, having information of her father's intention to seize David, advised him to make his escape; to effect which, she let him down through a window; and he fled to Samuel. He afterwards got an opportunity of conferring with Jonathan, and received from him fresh assurances of fidelity. Jonathan's steady attachment to David so incensed his father, that, losing all natural affection for so good a son, he attempted to smite him with his javelin. By this, Jonathan

knew

knew that his father was determined to destroy David: and he arose, and went away from his presence in great anger; for he was grieved for David. Jonathan, by appointment, had an interview with his beloved friend, who, in his conduct on this occasion, united all the respect and honour due to the rank of Jonathan, with the most endearing affection, and the most lively gratitude; so that his sorrow even exceeded Jonathan's: nothing could be more pathetic, than this their parting.

Maria. Did they ever meet again?

Aunt. They had one more interview in this world. But my watch tells me, we must part for the present.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.